This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

2:12 e. 48

PRESENTED TO
THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY
BY
SIR HUGH JACKSON, BT.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SANSON'S MEMOIRS.

VOL II.

Digitized by Google

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS OF THE SANSONS

From Private Notes and Documents.

[1688–1847.]

EDITED BY

HENRY SANSON,

LATE EXECUTIONER OF THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF PARIS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

London:
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY.
1876.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVII.	An Expiatory Mass	1
XXVIII.	The La Rouerie Conspiracy	29
XXIX.	Charlotte Corday	34
XXX.	Custine	42
XXXI.	The Queen	49
XXXII.	The Girondins	58
XXXIII.	Adam Lux.—The Duke of Orleans	71
XXXIV.	Madame Roland and Bailly	77
XXXV.	Charles Henri Sanson's Diary	90
XXXVI.	Charles Henri Sanson's Diary (*continued*)	112
XXXVII.	Charles Henri Sanson's Diary (*continued*)	125
XXXVIII.	Trial of Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Westermann, etc., etc.	130
XXXIX.	Charles Henri Sanson's Diary (*continued*)	135
XL.	Charles Henri Sanson's Diary (*continued*)	145

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER		PAGE
XLI.	CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY (*continued*) . .	158
XLII.	CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY (*continued*) . .	167
XLIII.	MY FATHER GOES INTO THE ARTILLERY.—HIS MS.	182
XLIV.	ARREST OF MY FATHER AND GREAT-UNCLE AFTER THE 9*th* OF THERMIDOR	191
XLV.	THE DEATH OF ROBESPIERRE	197
XLVI.	LESURQUES	212
XLVII.	MY VOCATION	223
XLVIII.	MY EDUCATION	228
XLIX.	MY FIRST EXECUTION	241
L.	LOUVEL	247
LI.	MY EXECUTIONS	253
APPENDIX		287

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS OF THE SANSONS.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN EXPIATORY MASS.

THE death of Louis XVI. profoundly disturbed Charles Henri Sanson. I do not know whether I have shown this extraordinary man in sufficient relief. Charles Henri was a true descendant of his stoical grandmother. He had been imbued with her ideas and principles, and believed in the legitimacy of his profession and social mission. He regarded himself as invested with stern and painful, yet withal necessary, functions. This conviction had given him enough strength and courage to discharge duties which, I have every reason to believe, clashed with his natural disposition. His sense of duty had, however, been confirmed by forty years' experience. At times the cruelty of certain punishments, as in the case of Damiens, had slightly shaken his strong faith; but a sentiment of obedience prevailed in the end, and his scruples vanished before the certainty that the judges were responsible for the sentences which he, as their blind instrument, carried out.

With such a theory he could not but regard the

Digitized by Google

reprobation in which his functions were held as a prejudice of the worst description: hence his petitions to Parliament and the National Assembly. I may add that, in the case of the latter tribunal, my grandfather was so dissatisfied with the arguments suggested against his plea, that he immediately wrote the following letter to the members of the National Assembly:

'Gentlemen,—For a long time the executioners of criminal judgments have complained of the injustice of a prejudice which partly awards to them the disgrace of the crimes which justice punishes through their instrumentality. They have hitherto suffered the humiliation, and found sufficient consolation in their consciences. It is now attempted to sanction this prejudice by declaring them unfit to hold civil rights. Such is, at least, the intention expressed by the Abbé Maury in the sitting of the 23rd of the present month.

'The Abbé Maury's motion has caused us considerable alarm, and we are convinced that justice must be deprived of its executive strength if the motion is carried.

'The executioner of Paris, Charles Henri Sanson, who hereby presents to you his most respectful remonstrances, declares (and all his *confrères* will follow his example) that he will tender his resignation if you declare that executioners are not citizens.

'The petitioner trusts that you will deign to examine the question with the attention it deserves. At a time when justice prevails, you will not suffer it to be overlooked.

'(Signed) SANSON,

'Executioner of criminal sentences in the town of Paris.'

Digitized by Google

I said before that the Assembly gave no decision respecting the petition presented by the executioners. The Assembly allowed the decree to stand as it had been previously worded, thus leaving the executioners to infer that they had gained their point. They were, in fact, henceforth treated as citizens; and we have seen my grandfather and father in the meetings of their sections and holding grades in the National Guard.

Such had been, up to the death of the King, Charles Henri Sanson's feelings concerning what he styled the honour of his profession. The blood which flowed freely under the Convention altered his sentiments. Seeing an edifice he had been taught to respect falling, he began to doubt whether he had a right to believe in the scaffold after the overthrow of the throne; whether the destruction of royalty did not call for the abolition of the office of executioner. These doubts especially harassed him on the night that preceded the execution of the King. His state of mind can easily be imagined when it is remembered that he had sympathy for Louis XVI. More than once he thought of running away; but thereby he would have exposed his family to great danger.

On January 21 my grandfather, who seldom left his home except when he was obliged, only spent a few moments with his wife and children. He came to see them after the execution, and then hurried away and returned after midnight. My grandmother was becoming very uneasy at his absence when Chesneau, who

Digitized by Google

was still living under Charles Henri Sanson's roof, told her that his old friend had asked him the address of an aged priest and two nuns he knew, and that he had probably gone to see them. My grandmother understood the object of such a visit. She knew her husband's religious feelings, and guessed that, in spite of the perils and difficulties of the adventure, he was in quest of a remedy for his troubled conscience.

Charles Henri Sanson returned at two o'clock in the morning, and before his friends had time to question him, he said :

'Chesneau, I have seen your *protégés*. It is bitterly cold. You must take some provisions to them to-morrow. You will provide them with victuals every week. But I do not want you to say whence these provisions come.—I have seen two nuns who are very miserable, my dear Mary,' he added, turning to my grandmother ; 'if you can give them some clothing you will do them a good turn and oblige me.'

Charles Henri Sanson retired after giving the above explanation of his absence. On the following day he related to his wife that he had found in a miserable hut of La Villette a priest who had escaped from the massacres of the Carmelites, and two nuns who had been driven away from their convent; that the priest had promised him that he would celebrate a mass, far less for the repose of the soul of the King than for the peace of his (Sanson's) conscience.

The secret of this expiatory mass was kept during the remainder of my grandfather's life; but after his

Digitized by Google

death, my grandmother and my father, believing that the anecdote would redound to his credit, related it to some of their friends. It came to the knowledge of an illustrious writer, Honoré de Balzac, who begged my father to confirm its authenticity. His behest was granted, and, with the help of the additional elements furnished to him by my father, he wrote the following moving account:[1]

Towards the end of the month of January 1793 an old lady was descending the incline which leads to the St. Laurent Church, in the Faubourg St. Martin. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Snow had fallen in the morning, so that the sound of footsteps could hardly be heard. It was very cold. The streets were lonely, and the natural fear inspired by the silence that prevailed was intensified by the terror which, at the time, was pervading the whole of France. The old lady had met no one. Her weak sight was even unable to detect in the distance, by the light of the lanterns, a few loiterers scattered like shadows along the immense thoroughfare. She was fearlessly crossing this solitude, as if old age were a talisman which could preserve her from any mishap.

After she had passed the Rue des Morts she thought she could detect the heavy and firm step of a man behind her. The idea that she was followed frightened her, and she stepped forward more briskly, so as to reach a well-lighted shop, hoping then to descry her

[1] This account has been reprinted in the edition of Balzac's complete works.

Digitized by Google

follower. As soon as she reached the first ray of horizontal light which issued from the shop, she suddenly turned round and saw a man whose form she could but just discern through the fog. The indistinct vision was enough for her. She tottered under the terror wherewith she was filled; for she did not doubt that she had been followed by the stranger ever since she had left her abode. The desire to escape from her silent persecutor gave her strength, and, without reasoning, she went faster, as if she could get out of the reach of a man who, obviously, could easily keep up with her. After running for a few minutes, she reached a pastrycook's shop, rushed in, and fell, rather than sat down, on a chair before the counter.

As she entered, a young woman who was darning looked up. Recognising the old-fashioned shape of a violet silk cloak which covered the old lady's shoulders, she hastened to open a drawer, as if to take out something she was to remit to her. The young woman's gesture and face betrayed a desire to get rid of the unknown as soon as possible, as if she had been one of those persons whom it is no pleasure to meet. She made a gesture of impatience on finding the drawer empty, and, without looking at the lady, she hurriedly left the counter, entered the back shop, and called her husband, who suddenly appeared.

'Where have you put ——?' she asked with an air of mystery, designating the old lady by a glance.

She did not finish her query. Although the pastrycook could only see the large black silk cap, adorned

Digitized by Google

with bows of violet ribbon, he disappeared, after looking at his wife in a manner which seemed to signify:

'Do you think I am stupid enough to leave it on your counter?'

Astonished at the silence and stillness of the old lady, the woman returned to her; and, upon looking at her, she was seized with compassion, or rather with curiosity.

Although the unknown lady's face was naturally livid, as that of a person addicted to austere habits, it was easy to see that some recent emotion had overcast it with extraordinary pallor. Her head gear was so contrived as to conceal her hair, doubtless silvered by age; for the cleanliness of her collar showed that she did not wear powder. Absence of any ornament gave her an appearance of religious severity. Her features were grave and proud. In former times the manners and habits of the upper class were so different from those belonging to other classes that it was easy to recognise a person of birth. The young woman was therefore convinced that the unknown was a *ci-devant*, and that she formerly belonged to the Court.

'Madam,' said she, instinctively and with respect, forgetting that this appellation was prohibited.

But the old lady made no answer. Her eyes were fixed on the panes of the shop, as if she saw a frightful apparition behind them.

'What is the matter with you, citoyenne?' enquired the master of the house, reappearing and calling the old lady's attention by handing her a small cardboard box wrapped in blue paper.

Digitized by Google

'Nothing—nothing, friends,' she answered, in a soft voice.

She looked up and thanked the pastrycook; but on perceiving the red cap he wore, she uttered a scream.

'You have betrayed me!'

The young woman and her husband answered with a gesture of horror which brought a blush to the unknown lady's countenance.

'Excuse me,' she said, with childish gentleness. Then taking a louis from her pocket, she presented it to the pastrycook.

'Here is the price you mentioned.'

There is a kind of poverty which the poor alone can guess. The pastrycook and his wife looked at each other, pointing to the old woman, and exchanged the same thought. This louis was probably the last she had. Her hands trembled when she offered it. She looked at it intently, but without avarice. Fasting and hardship were as visibly imprinted on her features as fear and ascetic habits. In her dress could be detected vestiges of splendour—worn-out silk; a clean although faded cloak; carefully mended lace, rags of opulence. The tradesman and his wife, hesitating between pity and love of gain, began by allaying their consciences in kind words.

'But, citoyenne, you seem very faint.'

'Would madam take something?' exclaimed the wife, interrupting her husband.

'We have some excellent broth,' said the pastrycook.

Digitized by Google

'It is so cold.—Madam was probably taken unwell when she came, but you can remain here and warm yourself.'

Encouraged by these kind expressions, the lady admitted that she had been followed by a man, and was afraid to return home alone.

'Is that all? Wait a moment, citoyenne!' said the man with the red cap.

He handed the louis to his wife, and impelled by the peculiar gratitude that fills a tradesman when he receives an exorbitant price for merchandise of moderate value, he retired, put on his uniform of National Guardsman, took up his hat and his musket, and reappeared.

But his wife had had time to reflect, and reflection drove away her compassion. Fearful that her husband should meddle with some mysterious and dangerous business, she tried to pull him by his coat-tail; but the pastrycook had already offered to escort the old lady.

'The man who followed the lady is still lurking around the shop,' exclaimed the young woman.

'I think he is,' candidly answered the old lady.

'Perhaps he is a spy! There may be some conspiracy! Don't go;—and take the box away from her.'

These words whispered in the pastrycook's ear by his wife deprived him of the slight courage he already possessed.

'I'll go and speak to him, and get rid of him directly!' cried the pastrycook, rushing into the street.

The old lady, as passive as a child, and quite bewildered, sat down again.

Digitized by Google

The honest tradesman soon returned. His face, which was naturally red and inflamed by the heat of his oven, had suddenly turned pale, and he was so terrified that his legs shook like those of a drunkard.

'Do you want to get us guillotined, you aristocrat?' he shrieked furiously, and with a thick utterance. 'Show us your heels—never come here again, and don't expect that I'll ever furnish you with elements of conspiracy.'

And the pastrycook tried to gain possession of the small box, which the lady had thrust into one of her pockets.

Hardly had the man's trembling hands touched her clothes than the unknown, preferring the dangers of the street, with God as her only protection, to the loss of that which she had just purchased, recovered the activity of her youth. She sprang to the door, opened it and disappeared, to the amazement of her trembling aggressors.

The unknown walked on quickly, but her momentary vigour soon collapsed. She could hear the spy, who was still following her, and whose step cracked on the snow which he pressed down under his heavy feet. She was obliged to stop. He stopped also. She dared neither to look at him nor to speak to him, either out of fear or of inability to find words. She then resumed her way with a slower step, and he slackened his progress so as to remain at a reasonable distance. He seemed to be the old woman's very shadow. The church clock was striking nine when the silent couple passed again before St. Laurent.

Digitized by Google

But it is in the nature of the soul, even in the most infirm, that calmness should follow a fit of violent agitation. It was probably due to this that the unknown lady, receiving no harm at the hands of her supposed persecutor, imagined that he was a secret friend who merely wished to afford her protection. She remembered all the circumstances which had attended the stranger's appearance, as if to find support for this consoling opinion; and thus she began to think that his intentions were good. Forgetting the terror evinced at his sight by the pastrycook, she advanced with a firm step along the higher regions of the Faubourg St. Martin.

After half an hour's walk, she reached a house situate near the cross formed by the principal street of the faubourg and the road which leads to the gate of Pantin. This place was one of the most lonely in Paris. The wind, passing over the Buttes-Chaumont and Belleville, hissed between the houses, or rather the huts, scattered in this desolate vale. No blackness could be more discouraging than that which pervaded this spot, which seemed the natural refuge of poverty and despair. The man who relentessly pursued the poor creature who was bold enough to traverse these dark and deserted parts, appeared struck with the sight. He stopped, thoughtful and hesitant. The faint light of a lantern, dimly shining through the fog, revealed his form but imperfectly; but fear improved the old woman's sight; and as she imagined that the man's face was sinister, her terror returned. Whilst her pursuer was still hesitating, she glided, in the shadow, towards the

Digitized by Google

door of the solitary house, turned the lock, and disappeared with marvellous rapidity.

The man was still motionless, looking at the house. It had the aspect of the buildings which give so miserable an appearance to the suburbs of Paris. It looked so dilapidated that a gust of wind, to all appearance, might have scattered it. The brown tiles of the roof, covered with moss, seemed ready to sink under the weight of the snow. Each landing had three windows, so rotten and antiquated that the wind freely entered the rooms. The general appearance of the old house was that of a tower of which the elements were achieving the overthrow. A faint light could be seen through the three upper windows, and the remainder of the house was plunged in complete darkness.

It was not without effort that the old woman ascended the steep and broken staircase, along which ran a rope in lieu of balustrade. She gave a gentle tap at the door of the upper apartment, and sat down in the chair which an old man hastened to present to her.

'Hide yourself—quick!' said she, breathlessly; 'for, although we do not often go out, our refuge is discovered and our steps are tracked.'

'What is the matter?' enquired another old woman, who was seated near the fire.

'The man who has been lurking about the house for the last few days, followed me this evening.'

At these words the three inhabitants of the garret looked at each other with every token of profound terror. The old man was the least agitated, perhaps

Digitized by Google

because he was in greater peril than his female companions. When a brave man labours under a great misfortune, or feels under the yoke of constant persecution, he submits to impending death, considering his days of respite as so many victories gained over fate.

The two women's looks were directed towards the old man, and showed that he was the only cause of their fear.

'Why should you not confide in God, my sisters?' he said, in a low but unctuous voice. 'We sang His praises amidst the cries uttered by the murderers and the murdered in the Convent of Carmelites. If it was His will that I should be saved, it was doubtless to provide for me a fate which I am bound to accept without a murmur. God protects His ministers, and can act with them as He likes. You must think of yourselves, not of me.'

'Nay, do not say so,' exclaimed the two old women.

'I considered myself as dead from the day on which I left the Abbey of Chelles,' cried the one of the two nuns who was sitting near the fire.

'Here is the Host,' said the other, handing to the priest the small box she had found so much trouble in procuring.

'But,' she cried, 'I hear a step on the staircase!'

At these words all three listened. The noise subsided.

'Do not be frightened,' said the priest, 'if some one tries to enter. A person on whose fidelity we can reckon is preparing to cross the frontier, and will take the letters I have written to the Duke de Lorges

Digitized by Google

and the Marquis de Béthune, in which I beg them to think of the means of removing you from this horrible country—from death and misery, which are our constant attendants.'

'Will you not come with us, then?' asked the nuns with a kind of despair.

'My place is among victims!' said the priest with simplicity.

They remained silent, eyeing their companion with admiration.

'Sister Martha,' said he to the nun who had brought the Host, 'the envoy I was speaking of is to answer *Fiat voluntas* to the word *Hosannah*.'

'Some one is coming up the stairs!' exclaimed the other nun, opening a place of concealment cleverly built under the roof.

This time it was easy to hear, amidst profound silence, the steps of a man striking against pieces of hard mud which covered the stairs. The priest hastily entered a kind of cupboard, and the nun threw some clothes over him.

'You can close the cupboard now, Sister Agatha,' said he, in a low voice.

Hardly was the priest out of sight when three raps at the door startled the two poor creatures. They looked at each other without daring to utter a word.

Construing their silence in his own way, the man who was knocking pushed open the door and suddenly appeared. The two nuns shuddered when they recognised the person who for the last five or six days had been

Digitized by Google

lurking around the house. They moved not, and eyed him with uneasy curiosity, in the manner of shy children who silently observe strangers.

The man was of middle height and rather portly; but nothing in his demeanour or in his face indicated malignity. He neither advanced nor spoke, but examined the room. Two straw mats, stretched out on the floor, were the only couch of the nuns. There was a table in the middle of the room. Thereon was placed a brass candlestick, a few plates, three knives, and a round loaf. The fire was not of the brightest, and a few pieces of wood, heaped up in a corner, showed the poverty of the inmates. The walls, which were painted over, betrayed the decrepid state of the roof, for brownish stains showed that water trickled down from above. A relic, saved probably from the sack of the Abbey of Chelles, was deposited on the mantelpiece. The remainder of the furniture consisted of three chairs, two boxes, and an old chest of drawers. A door near the mantelpiece indicated that there was another room on the same floor.

This enumeration was made in a few seconds by the stranger who had appeared under such sinister auspices. A feeling of compassion was visible on his countenance, and he looked benevolently upon the two women. He seemed at least as embarrassed as they were, and the pause which followed lasted a full minute. At length the visitor perceived the moral weakness and inexperience of the poor creatures, and he said to them in a voice of which he tried to soften the tone:

Digitized by Google

'I do not come here as an enemy, sisters. If some misfortune were to happen to you, do not attribute any share of it to me. I have a favour to ask.'

They remained silent.

'If I annoy you—if I cause you any inconvenience—speak fearlessly, I will retire; but know that I am entirely devoted to you, and that if I can be of any service you can employ me without fear.'

There was such an accent of truth in these words that Sister Agatha, who belonged to the family of Béthune, and whose manners seemed to indicate that in former days she had known the gaiety of fêtes and breathed the atmosphere of the Court, pointed to a chair, as if inviting the speaker to sit down. The unknown manifested a kind of joy not unmingled with sadness, when he understood the gesture; and he waited until the two nuns themselves were seated before he accepted the invitation.

'You have given shelter,' he resumed, 'to a venerable priest, who miraculously escaped from the massacre of the Carmelites.'

'*Hosannah!*' exclaimed Sister Agatha, interrupting the stranger.

'That is not his name, I think,' answered he.

'But, sir, we have no priest here,' said Sister Martha, 'and——'

'You should be more careful,' continued the stranger, in a gentle tone; and he stretched out his hand and took up a breviary. 'You do not know Latin, and——'

Digitized by Google

He stopped, for the extraordinary emotion which appeared on the features of the two nuns showed him that he was going too far. They trembled and their eyes were full of tears.

'Be reassured,' said the unknown visitor, with a frank voice. 'I know the name of your guest and yours also. Five days ago I heard of your distress, and of your devotion to the venerable Abbé de——'

'Hush!' said Sister Agatha, with candour, putting up a finger.

'You may perceive, sisters, that if I had the horrible intention of betraying you, I might have done so ere this.'

Hearing these words, the priest emerged from his hiding-place and advanced towards the stranger.

'I cannot believe, sir,' said he to him, 'that you are one of our persecutors, and I do not distrust you. What do you want?'

The priest's simple manner and the noble expression of his features might have disarmed even assassins. The mysterious individual who had given animation to this scene of misery looked for a few moments at the group formed by these three beings, and, assuming a tone of confidence, he spoke to the priest in the following terms:

'Father, I came to beseech you to say a mass for the repose of the soul of a person whose body—whose body shall never be buried in hallowed ground.'

The priest shuddered; and the nuns, not understanding yet what the stranger wanted, remained, with outstretched necks, in an attitude of curiosity.

Digitized by Google

The priest scanned the stranger's features. Evident anxiety could be seen there, and his looks were humble and beseeching.

'Well,' answered the priest, 'return at midnight: I shall then be ready to celebrate the only funeral service we can offer in expiation of crime.'

The stranger started; but a gentle and grave satisfaction overspread his features, and, after bowing respectfully to the old priest and to the nuns, he disappeared, manifesting a kind of silent gratitude which was understood by these generous souls.

The stranger returned two hours after, and, after discreetly knocking at the door, he was introduced by Mdlle. de Charost. She led him to the second room on the same landing, where everything was prepared for the ceremony.

Between two shafts the nuns had placed the old chest of drawers, of which the old-fashioned shape was concealed by an altar-covering of green moire. A large crucifix of ebony and ivory, attached to the yellow wall, showed off the nudity of the room and attracted the eyes. Four small thin tapers which the sisters had fixed with yellow wax upon this improvised altar furnished a pale and flickering light. These tapers hardly lighted the other parts of the room, but it made the holy objects discernible, and thereby looked like rays descending from Heaven on this unadorned altar. The floor was damp. The roof, which steeply descended on both sides, as is usual in garrets, was cracked, and an icy wind penetrated through the openings. Nothing could

Digitized by Google

be less pompous, and yet never, perhaps, was anything more impressive than this gloomy ceremony. Profound silence overcast the scene with a kind of dark majesty; and the grandeur of the act so strongly contrasted with the poverty of the display that a sentiment of religious awe prevailed.

The two old nuns were kneeling on either side of the altar, and, regardless of the dampness of the floor, they joined in the prayers of the priest who, clad in his pontifical vestments, was holding up a gold pyx studded with precious stones—a sacred vase saved, no doubt, from the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles. Then, next to this pyx, the wine and the water reserved for the holy sacrifice were contained in two glasses scarcely worthy of the lowest wine-shop. As he had no missal, the priest had placed his breviary on a corner of the altar. A common plate was provided for the laving of the innocent and bloodless hands. Everything was immense though small, poor though noble, profane and holy at the same time.

The stranger piously kneeled between the two nuns; but, suddenly perceiving a crape around the pyx and the crucifix, he was assailed by a recollection so painful that drops trickled down his brow.

The four silent actors in this scene looked at each other mysteriously; and then their souls, acting in unison, exchanged their religious sentiments, and joined with each other in religious commiseration.

It seemed as if their thoughts had evoked the martyr whose remains had been devoured by quicklime,

Digitized by Google

and as if his shadow was before them in all its majesty. They celebrated an *Obit*, without the body of the defunct. Under these tiles and disjointed rafters four Christians were about to intercede with God for a King of France, and to go through the funeral service without his coffin. It was the purest of devotions, an astonishing act of faithfulness accomplished without fear. The whole Monarchy was there, in the prayer of a priest and two poor women; and perhaps the Revolution was also represented by this man, whose face betrayed too much remorse not to make believe that he was actuated by boundless repentance.

Instead of pronouncing the Latin words *introibo ad altare Dei*, &c., the priest, by a divine inspiration, looked at his three companions who represented Christian France, and said to them:

'Let us enter God's sanctuary!'

At these words, uttered with impressive softness, the stranger and the two nuns were seized with religious awe. God could not have appeared more majestic under the cupola of St. Peter's at Rome than He then appeared to these Christians in this refuge of misery.

The stranger's fervour was sincere. The sentiment which united the prayers of these four servants of God and the King was unanimous. The holy words sounded like celestial music. When the *Pater noster* was said, tears came to the stranger's eyes. To this prayer the priest added, 'And forgive the regicides as Louis XVI. himself forgave them.'

The two nuns saw two large tears rolling down the

Digitized by Google

stranger's manly cheeks. The mass for the dead was recited. The *Domine salvum fac regem*, sung in a low voice, moved these faithful Royalists. They thought that the child King on whose behalf they were imploring was in the hands of his enemies.

When the service was terminated, the priest made a sign to the two nuns, who retired. As soon as he was alone with the stranger, he went up to him with a gentle and paternal air, and said to him, sadly:

'My son, if you dipped your hands in the blood of the King, confide in me—there is no fault that cannot be forgiven by a repentance so sincere and so touching as yours.'

At the priest's first words, the stranger made a movement indicating terror; but he regained his self-possession, and looking calmly at the astonished ecclesiastic:

'Father,' said he, 'none is more innocent of the crime than I am.'

'I am bound to believe you!' said the priest.

There was a pause, during which he examined his penitent. Then, still believing him to be one of those timorous members of the Convention who sacrificed a royal head in order to preserve their own, he observed in a grave voice: 'Remember, my son, that it is not enough not to have taken part in this great crime to be absolved. Those who could defend the King and moved not a finger in his defence, shall have a heavy account to answer for before the King of Heaven. A heavy account indeed,' added the priest, shaking his head, 'for

Digitized by Google

they became the unwilling accomplices of this horrible deed.'

'Do you think,' enquired the stranger, with astonishment, 'that indirect participation will be punished? Is, then, the soldier who attended the execution guilty of a crime?'

The priest hesitated.

Happy at the embarrassment in which he had plunged this puritan of royalty, by placing him between the dogma of passive obedience which, according to the partisans of monarchy, should predominate in the army, and the equally important dogma which consecrates the respect due to the person of a King, the stranger hastened to construe this hesitation of the priest into a favourable answer to the doubts which engrossed him. He then said, not wishing to give further time for reflection to the venerable Jansenist:

'I cannot offer an ordinary fee for the funeral service you have just celebrated for the repose of the soul of the King and for the quietude of my conscience. An invaluable boon can only be returned by an equally invaluable offering. Deign to accept, therefore, this gift of a holy relic. A day shall come when you will understand its value.'

The stranger, suiting the action to the word, offered the priest a very light and small box. The priest took it, impulsively as it were; for the gravity of the man's words, and the respect with which he held the box, surprised him very much.

They then returned to the room where the two nuns

Digitized by Google

were waiting for them. 'You live in a house,' said the stranger, 'of which the owner, Mucius Cœvola, the plasterer who lives on the first floor, is famous, in his section, for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbons. Formerly he was one of Prince de Conti's grooms, and what he possesses he got from his master. If you remain indoors, you are safer here than anywhere else in France. Do not move. Pious people will see to your wants, and you can wait for more prosperous days without danger. A year hence, on January 21' (in pronouncing these last words he could not restrain a shudder), 'if you select this melancholy shelter for your abode, I shall return and celebrate with you the expiatory mass.'

He bowed to the speechless inmates of the garret, cast a final look on the symptoms of their poverty, and went away.

For the two innocent nuns, such an adventure had the interest of a romance. As soon as they were apprised of the mysterious present made by the unknown visitor to the venerable abbé, the box was placed on the table, and the three faces, feebly lighted by the candle, evinced uncontrollable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Charost opened the box, and found therein a rather large pocket-handkerchief of very fine cambric. It was soiled by a few drops of perspiration. After looking at it with scrupulous attention, they found a number of small dark spots, as if the cambric had received splashes.

'It is blood!' said the priest, in a deep voice.

The two sisters recoiled with horror from the relic.

Digitized by Google

For these simple creatures the mystery which surrounded the stranger became unexplainable. As for the priest, he did not even attempt to clear it. The three prisoners soon perceived that, even in the darkest days of the Reign of Terror, a powerful hand was extended over them. At first they received wood and provisions; then the two nuns guessed that a woman was acting in unison with their protector, when they received linen and garments which enabled them to walk out without attracting attention by the quaintness of the old-fashioned dresses they had hitherto been compelled to wear. At length Mucius Cœvola gave them two cards of civism.[1] They frequently received communications concerning the safety of the priest, and they found this advice so opportune and well-timed that they inferred that their correspondent must be familiar with the secrets of the State. In spite of the famine which prevailed in Paris, they found at their door rations of white bread, which were regularly brought by invisible hands. In these circumstances the noble inmates of the garret could not but believe their protector to be the person who had caused the expiatory mass to be celebrated in the night of January 21, 1793. He therefore became the object of peculiar respect to these three poor creatures, who had no hope, save in him, and who lived solely through his agency. Morning and evening the pious souls made wishes for his prosperity and salvation.

[1] The *carte de civisme* was a kind of passport with which it was impossible to dispense during the Reign of Terror.—N. F.D.

Digitized by Google

Their gratitude, being, as it were, rekindled every day, was naturally attended with a feeling of curiosity which became more and more intense. The circumstances that had accompanied the appearance of the stranger formed the usual subject of their conversations. They made a thousand conjectures, and the occupation thereby furnished to them was an additional boon. They were resolved not to allow him to shirk their friendship when he returned according to his promise, to celebrate the melancholy anniversary of the death of Louis XVI. The long-expected evening came at last.

At midnight the heavy step was heard again on the old wooden staircase. The room had been prepared for his reception. The altar was in its place. This time the sisters hurried to the door before the stranger had time to reach the top landing, and lighted his way. Mdlle. de Charost even descended a few steps, thus sooner to catch sight of her benefactor.

'Come,' said she, in a moved and affectionate voice. 'Come; you are expected.'

The man raised his head, threw a dark look at the nun, and did not answer. She felt as if a dress of ice enveloped her, and was silent. The stranger entered, and at his sight gratitude and curiosity expired in every heart. He was perhaps less cold, taciturn, and gloomy than he had at first appeared to these beings, whose exalted sentiments yearned to launch into friendship. The three poor prisoners understood that this man wished to remain a stranger to them, and they submitted. The priest thought he detected a faint smile

Digitized by Google

on the stranger's face when he saw the preparations that had been made for his reception. He heard mass, prayed, and disappeared, after answering by a few words of negative politeness to Mdlle. de Charost's invitation to share a small repast she had prepared.

The expiatory mass was mysteriously celebrated in the garret until public worship was re-established by the First Consul. When the nuns and the abbé could reappear in the world without fear, they saw the unknown no more.

The 'Unknown' was, as I said before, Charles Henri Sanson, my grandfather, who sought, by a pious ceremony, to pacify his troubled conscience. Our family watched over these poor proscripts until the end of the Reign of Terror, and the abbé and sisters never knew the name of their protector; for the sequel of the story related by Balzac (which I have omitted) is not true, and was only written for the wants of fiction.

The relic offered to the old priest by Charles Sanson was the handkerchief the King held on reaching the scaffold. He had used it more than once, on the way from prison, to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, and a few drops of blood had stained it after the head had fallen. The different garments worn by the unfortunate monarch at the time of his death were carefully preserved by my grandfather. He was, however, unable to withhold some articles from his assistants, who, as I was told, sold them for large sums.

My father asked for and obtained the shoes and the

Digitized by Google

collar buckle ; and he was only induced to part with them by an event which is worth relating. A few days after the King's death a horseman, followed by a servant, rang at our door, and asked for the master of the house. My grandfather was out ; so my father received the visitor. The latter was a man of fine appearance, in the flower of age ; he was dressed in black, and the Bourbonian cast of his features strongly reminded my father of Louis XVI.

'Sir!' said the new comer, who appeared much moved, 'I am told that you possess different objects which once belonged to the late King. As I suppose you wish to sell them, I came to make you an offer.'

'Sir,' answered my father, somewhat nettled, 'we have, as you say, kept a few articles of apparel belonging to the late King, but we owe no explanations to anyone concerning the use we intend to make of them ; and I may as well tell you at once that we do not propose to part with them, at any price.

The visitor looked surprised.

'What ! if I offered you a princely ransom for your prize——'

'We would not accept it.'

While he was speaking, my father looked attentively at the stranger, and the similarity of his features and of those of Louis XVI. struck him again. His features were finer than the unfortunate prince's, but it was the same aquiline nose, high forehead, and thick lips which formed the typical signs of the race of the Bourbons. The visitor glanced around the room, and, seeing on the wall

Digitized by Google

a very fine engraving of one of the last portraits of Louis XV., an expression of surprise and emotion appeared on his countenance. This engraving, dated 1733, was due to Daulle, one of the celebrated engravers of the time.

'If you knew,' said he, 'on what grounds I ask for these melancholy souvenirs, perhaps you would not refuse to let me have them. Let me inform you that I belong, by secret relationship, to the family of the royal victim. I am the son of the King whose portrait I have before me; I am usually styled the Abbé de Bourbon.'

My father looked at the engraving, and saw that his visitor bore a wonderful likeness to Louis XV. The Abbé de Bourbon, as he was called, was one of the illegitimate sons of this voluptuous monarch, who were indeed far too numerous to be legally recognised. Secretly protected by Louis XVI., the young abbé had been enabled to lead a semi-princely life. This patronage had inspired deep gratitude in the Abbé de Bourbon; and his desire to possess some remembrance of his beloved protector was but natural. My father could not resist his entreaties, and he gave him the shoes which the King had used last, and his collar buckle. He declined to accept any remuneration, and considered himself amply repaid by the abbé's profuse thanks.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LA ROUERIE CONSPIRACY.

THE tribunal instituted on August 10, shortly after the King's death, was replaced by the 'Revolutionary Tribunal,' and the guillotine, which for some days had remained bloodless, was again in daily demand. The executions which took place then are not of sufficient importance to be recorded in these memoirs; and no name worth mentioning occurs in my notes up to the famous conspiracy of La Rouerie, which aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of the Republic.

The larger portion of the nobility had emigrated; but a goodly number of seigneurs still remained in France. These noblemen lived far from each other in their castles and country-seats, and watched with fear the progress of the Revolution. They abhorred the new state of things, and longed to take their revenge; but fear kept them apart, and their separation prevented them from conspiring against the Revolutionists.

Curiously enough, it was an obscure individual who undertook to bring together all these elements which were hostile to the new régime, and therewith to form in the west of France a league sufficiently powerful to

Digitized by Google

destroy the young Republic. This man's name was Tuffin de la Rouerie.

He was one of those bold and active individuals who love adventure. The beginning of his career was very romantic. He entered the army, and, after distinguishing himself as an officer, he became a Trappist. But such a man could not be content with wearing the cassock; he left La Trappe, and took part in the American War of Independence.

On his return to France, he showed some favour for the new ideas that were then spreading like wildfire; the danger of the King, however, excited his imagination, and rekindled his lukewarm loyalty. He went to Coblentz, and proposed to the princes to go and foment an insurrection in Brittany.

La Rouerie returned with a moderate sum of money; and, with no help beyond his own indomitable will, he undertook to realise the plan he had devised.

The record of his life would fill a volume, during the year he employed in organising the conspiracy which extended over the whole of Brittany, and which but for the death of its originator would have become one of the most gigantic ever recorded by history. He was everywhere and nowhere; he was seen in Jersey, in London, in Coblentz, and a few days after his steps were traced in the wilds of Brittany.

The plot was his own work. He confided his secret to no intermediary; he himself visited the most humble partisans of royalty, raised their courage, and stimulated their zeal. He showed them the King's palace invaded,

Digitized by Google

the royal family outraged, the King's head covered with the red nightcap. He proved to them the necessity of defending royalty by arms. If age, infirmities, or sex prevented them from joining the civil war, he very cleverly obtained a year of their income for the benefit of the enterprise.

In the month of August 1792 the nets of the conspiracy extended to all towns, villages, and hamlets in Brittany, and La Rouerie was the only man who held the strings of the plot. His excessive prudence prevented the plot from succeeding, and saved France from great danger. The revolution of August 10 appalled La Rouerie. Until then he had waited for a favourable opportunity. The King was now a prisoner, the Prussians were in full retreat, and he began to fear that the time was past and that it was too late.

Sorrow, excitement, and, above all, the extraordinary fatigues he had endured, had ruined his health; his frame gave way, and he sought shelter at Lamballe; but suspicious faces having been observed around the house where he was concealed, he sought another refuge, after burying in the garden all the papers he possessed; and, under the name of Gosselin, he claimed the hospitality of a Breton gentleman of the neighbourhood, M. Delamotte de Laguyomerais. La Rouerie now felt that he was dying. He revealed his real name to his host, and did not conceal the danger to which his generous hospitality exposed him. Although the local authorities had no knowledge of the extent of the conspiracy, its existence was no secret to them. Two

Digitized by Google

of La Rouerie's agents, Latouche and Lalligaud-Morillon, had sold to Danton the secrets which had been entrusted to them. A reward had been offered for La Rouerie's apprehension. The dying man stoically indicated to his host the precautions he was to take in order to conceal his body and prevent it from being identified; and shortly afterwards he expired.

M. de Laguyomerais applied to a surgeon of St. Servan, named Lemasson, with whom he was acquainted. The latter disfigured La Rouerie's corpse by numerous incisions, and in the following night the conspirator was deposited in a neighbouring wood, in a hole full of quicklime.

Unfortunately for M. de Laguyomerais, there was a traitor among his servants; a certain Chefty denounced him, and the remains of the proscript were discovered. It was ascertained that he had spent several days at Lamballe, at Mdme. de la Fauchais's house; and a search in this lady's garden led to the discovery of the papers which La Rouerie had consigned to the earth. La Rouerie had, however, destroyed the list of his accomplices. But M. de Laguyomerais, his family and his servants, the surgeon of St. Servan, and a few Breton gentlemen were arrested, sent to Paris, and arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The trial began on August 8, and lasted ten days. The two sons of M. de Laguyomerais were discharged; M. de Laguyomerais himself, and his wife, Marie-Jeanne Micault; his brother-in-law, Mathurin Micault de Minville; Mdme. de la Fauchais; the Abbé Thébaut

Digitized by Google

de Lachavenais, tutor of Laguyomerais' sons; Anne de Pontavis, late officer in the Armagnac regiment; Picot de Moelan; Locquer de Granville; and Gurge de Fontévieux, were sentenced to death; and on August 18 they suffered their fate with the greatest courage.

Shortly before the above affair, another remarkable trial occurred. The Convention had sent to the department of Jura two of its members, Léonard Bourdon and Prost, with the mission of watching the operation of recruiting. The two delegates had stopped at Orleans, where an attempt was made to murder Bourdon. The Convention, indignant at the treatment offered to one of its members, called the municipality of Orleans before it. Orleans was noted for its lukewarm republicanism, and the Government deemed it necessary to make an example; the municipality was suspended, and a number of national guards who had attacked Bourdon were arrested and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Four were acquitted, and nine were sentenced to death.

My grandfather received Fouquier-Tinville's injunction to be ready; but public opinion was so strongly bent on clemency that Charles Henri Sanson himself, who was rather sceptical in such matters, did not think the execution would take place. Petitions were presented to the Convention in favour of the culprits, but no notice of them was taken, and the nine Orleanese were led to the scaffold. They were no exception to the rule, and died with great firmness.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

ON July 13, at the very moment when the corpses of the nine Orleanese were being taken to the cemetery of La Madeleine, another representative of the people was murdered. This was Marat, and the hand that dealt the death blow was a woman's.

There lived at Caen a girl named Marie-Anne Charlotte de Corday d'Armont. Her family belonged to the aristocracy, and one of her ancestors was one of the greatest national glories of France. Jacques François de Corday d'Armont, her father, was the descendant of Marie Corneille, sister of the author of 'Le Cid.' M. de Corday was poor; his daughter Charlotte was a child when her mother died, and these circumstances influenced her oversensitive and enthusiastic nature. She strongly sympathised with the Revolution, and it was in a fit of revolutionary fanaticism that she determined to go to Paris and kill Marat, whom she regarded as the worst enemy of the new régime.

She confided her intention to no one, and secretly left Caen for Paris on July 9, and arrived on the 11th.

Digitized by Google

On the following day, she went to see Duperret, a member of the Convention, for whom she had a letter. He promised to take her on the following day to the Home Office, where she wished to solicit on behalf of one of her friends, Mdlle. de Forbin. On the Saturday before calling on Duperret at the appointed hour, she wrote a note to Marat, asking for an interview. Charlotte Corday then called on the minister, in her protector's company; but Duperret was not in favour, and he could not obtain an audience. He accompanied Charlotte as far as the Palais-Royal and left her. When she was alone she entered a cutler's shop, and bought a knife with an ebony handle, and then returned to her hotel, expecting to find there Marat's answer.

Marat was ill; for some time he had not attended the sittings of the Convention. It seems to have been Charlotte Corday's original idea to strike him in the very assembly of which he was a member; but his indisposition necessitated a change in her plans. She called at Marat's house on the 13th, but was not admitted. She returned in the evening, and on her assurance that her business was of a pressing nature, she was at length ushered into Marat's presence.

The 'father of the people,' as he was styled, was in his bath. A cloth had been thrown over the bath, and Marat was writing on a board, which he used as a desk. He put a few questions to Charlotte, who suddenly approached the bath; leaning over Marat she struck him with her knife. The blow was dealt with such force that the weapon entered Marat's bosom up to the

Digitized by Google

handle. Marat uttered a cry and expired almost instantly.

His shriek for help brought in a commissionnaire named Laurent Basse, and two female attendants. Charlotte Corday was standing near the window, and did not try to escape. The commissionnaire struck her down with a chair; she rose, but Basse knocked her down a second time, and held her to the ground, while the two attendants and a surgeon were carrying Marat to his bed. A number of national guards came up, and Charlotte Corday was arrested.

The news was soon known at large, and an immense crowd assembled around Marat's dwelling, clamouring for the assassin's head. It was not deemed prudent to take Charlotte to prison until popular effervescence had subsided; she was therefore incarcerated in Marat's apartment, where Guellard du Mesnil, a commissary of police, questioned her. She answered all questions with a calmness and dignity which never forsook her until her death. A few hours after, she was taken to the Prison de l'Abbaye, where the members of the Committee of Public Safety interrogated her several times.

Charlotte appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal on July 17. She showed great firmness during the trial, the result of which, of course, was a foregone conclusion. After the jury had given in a verdict of death, she asked the gendarmes to take her to her counsel, M. Chauveau de la Garde, whom she heartily thanked for his services. Charlotte Corday was then transferred to her cell, whence she was soon to be led to the

Digitized by Google

Place de la Révolution. A priest came forward, but she firmly although courteously declined his services.

She had hardly been ten minutes in her cell when a painter, who had commenced a sketch of her in the course of the trial, entered and asked her permission to finish it. Charlotte readily acquiesced. During the sitting, which lasted an hour and a half, the unfortunate creature conversed freely with the artist, and she evinced neither surprise nor fear when the door was again thrown open, to admit the clerks of the court and the executioner. My grandfather had brought the red shirt reserved for parricides, which Charlotte Corday was to wear on her way to the guillotine.

In a preceding chapter I stated that Charles Henri Sanson had, during a period of the revolutionary crisis, kept a diary, not only of executions but also of his personal impressions. This record only became regular towards the end of Brumaire 1793; but my grandfather wrote a circumstantial account of Charlotte Corday's execution. I give it here in full:

'On this day, Wednesday, July 17, first year of the one and indivisible Republic, I executed Charlotte Corday, of Caen, who murdered the patriot Marat, member of the Convention.

'On Wednesday, 17th, as above, at ten o'clock in the morning, I went to take the orders of Citizen Fouquier-Tinville. Citizen Fouquier was busy; he sent word for me to wait. Meanwhile I went out, and had some breakfast. At one o'clock in the afternoon a citizen who had just left the Tribunal told me that the girl was

Digitized by Google

convicted. I made haste back, and met Citizen Fouquier in the witnesses' room. He was quarrelling with Citizen Montané, whom he charged with being too favourable to the accused. They entered a private room, and remained there an hour and a half. On reappearing, Citizen Fouquier saw me and said angrily, "What are you dallying here for?" I answered that he had given me no orders. Citizen Fabricius handed me a copy of the judgment, and we went to the Conciergerie together. I spoke to Richard, the gaoler, and observed that his wife was pale and frightened. I enquired whether she was unwell. She said, "Wait a moment, and perhaps your heart will fail you too." Richard conducted us to the cell occupied by the culprit. Citizens Tirrasse and Monet, the clerks of the Tribunal, entered first. I remained on the threshold. In the cell were two persons, a gendarme, and a citizen who was finishing Charlotte Corday's portrait. She was writing something on the back of a book. She looked in my direction, and asked me to wait. When she had finished, Citizens Tirrasse and Monet read out the judgment, and meanwhile Charlotte Corday folded the paper on which she had written and gave it to Citizen Monet, requesting him to hand it to Pontécoulant, the deputy. She then removed her chair to the middle of the room, took off her cap, sat down, and told me to cut her hair. Since M. de la Barre I had not seen courage equal to hers. We were, in all, six or seven men, whose profession was anything but softening; and yet she was less moved than we were. When her hair was cropped, she gave a part of it to the artist who had taken her portrait,

Digitized by Google

and handed the remainder to Richard, the gaoler, requesting him to give it to his wife. I gave her the red shirt, which she arranged herself. As I was preparing to pinion her, she asked me whether she could keep her gloves, because those who had tied her when she was arrested had tightened the cords so much that her skin was broken. I answered that she could do as she liked, but that I could pinion her without hurting her. She smiled and said, "To be sure you ought to know how to do it!" and held out her naked hands. We entered the cart, which contained two chairs, one of which I presented to her. She declined, and I told her that she was right, as the jolting of the cart was less trying in an erect position. She smiled, but was silent. There was thunder and rain when we reached the quays, but the crowd was as thick as ever. There had been a good many cries on our leaving the Conciergerie; but these cries became less and less numerous as we advanced. Insults came only from those who marched around the cart. At a window in the Rue St. Honoré, I recognised Citizens Robespierre, Camille-Desmoulins, and Danton, members of the Convention. Citizen Robespierre appeared very excited, and spoke a great deal to his companions; but the latter, and particularly Citizen Danton, did not seem to hear him, so attentively did they look at the culprit. I myself often turned round to look at her. And the more I saw of her the more I wished to see. It was not on account of her personal beauty, great as that was; but I thought it was impossible that she could remain so calm and courageous as I saw her; yet what I hitherto considered as beyond

Digitized by Google

the strength of human nerve happened. During the two hours I spent in her company I could detect no sign of anger or indignation on her face. She did not speak; she looked, not at those who insulted her, but at the citizens who were at the windows. The crowd was so dense that our cart advanced very slowly. As she was sighing, I said to her: "You find the way very long, I fear?" "No matter," she replied; "we are sure to reach the scaffold sooner or later." I rose as we reached the Place de la Révolution, and stood before her, in order to conceal the sight of the scaffold from her; but she insisted on looking at the machine, saying, "I have a right to be curious; this is the first time I see it!" In stepping out of the cart, I perceived that unknown individuals had mingled with my assistants. While I was requesting the gendarmes to clear the place, Charlotte Corday nimbly ascended the steps of the guillotine. On reaching the platform, Fermin, one of my men, suddenly snatched away her neckerchief, and she stretched out on the weigh-plank of her own accord. Although I was not ready, I thought it would be barbarous to prolong the poor girl's sufferings, even for a second, and I made a sign to Fermin, who pulled the rope. I was still at the foot of the scaffold when one of those who had tried to meddle with a business which was not theirs, a carpenter named Legros, picked up Charlotte Corday's head and showed it to the people. Although I was used to this kind of thing, I could not help turning away. It was by the murmurs of the crowd that I became aware that the rascal had struck

Digitized by Google

the head; and I was afterwards told that the face turned red, as if resenting the insult. When I went home, the prediction of Richard's wife was realised. As I was sitting down, my wife said to me, "What is the matter with you—why are you so pale?"'

My grandfather wrote to the papers, contradicting the statement that the perpetrator of the outrage he has just related was one of his assistants. The Revolutionary Tribunal ordered Legros to be arrested, and publicly reprimanded him.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXX.

CUSTINE.

AFTER the painful execution of the preceding chapter, we again relapse into unimportant executions, but the quantity makes up for the quality.

On July 18 Joseph Mazellier, late officer in the cavalry regiment of Royal-Piémont, convicted of emigration and condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, was executed.

On the 19th a working man, Jean Pierre Pelletier, was sent to the scaffold for endeavouring to pass a forged assignat, which he knew to be spurious.

On the 20th, 24th, and 25th three emigrants suffered; these were Louis Charles de Malherbe, late infantry officer; Joseph François Coquard, and François Charles Coquereau, also officers. Malherbe was barely twenty years of age.

On the 27th Riche Thomas St. Martin perished for the crime of forgery.

At this time the Tribunal was modified in a manner which promised a still more plentiful harvest of heads. The Committee of Public Safety divided it into two sections, and raised to thirty the number of the judges.

Digitized by Google

Montané, the president of the Tribunal, had himself been arraigned before the second section for favouring Charlotte Corday. He was, however, acquitted.

From the 1st to the 17th of August the two sections sent to the guillotine Pierre Maurice Collinet de la Salle-Souville, late lieutenant-general, for corresponding with his nephews, who had emigrated; Charles Joseph Lescuyer, late general of the Belgian cavalry, convicted of complicity with Dumouriez; Jean-Baptiste Tourtier, a *ci-devant*; André Jonas, a gendarme of the twenty-ninth division, for saying in a café that when he heard of the King's death he wanted to leave his regiment, in order not to serve the Republic; and an emigrant priest, Jean-Joseph Saunier.

On the 15th General Custine appeared before the Tribunal.

Republican enthusiasm would not admit that the soldiers of liberty could be conquered otherwise than by treason. This profound and sincere faith in the paramount power of right was the element of the triumphs of the Republic, and the principle of its future grandeur. Unfortunately the generals of the French army were far from sharing the sublime confidence. They were for the most part old officers, who believed in nothing beyond discipline, tactics, and regular battles, and who smiled when they read the messages in which the Convention decreed victory. The result was that the movement of retreat was followed by an outburst of popular indignation, and the unlucky general was usually charged with wilful neglect of duty.

Digitized by Google

Dumouriez's treason unfortunately justified this national mistrust. As to Custine, who commanded the army of the North, he had not deemed it prudent to relieve besieged Valenciennes until his troops were reorganised. He was charged with treason, and arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Popular irritation was very great against him. There can be no doubt that Custine was not faultless, but his last campaign had not been without glory. While manœuvring on the flanks of the Prussian army which Dumouriez was opposing, he had captured Worms, Frankental, Regensburg, Frankfort, &c.; but he was with reason charged with not having turned these advantages to profit, and thereby transformed the retreat of the Prussians into a rout. He had allowed the enemy to recapture Frankfort; he had insufficiently victualled Regensburg, in which Kleber was bravely holding out. Such mistakes were murderous to Kleber's military repute, but they did not deserve death. The Tribunal remained undecided for some time, for the trial lasted not less than fourteen days. But Custine was not liked, and the then powerful Hébert was his mortal foe. Custine nevertheless retained his presence of mind; he explained his military operations, and his counsel, Trenson Ducoudray, spoke eloquently in his favour.

The Tribunal retired after these two speeches, and on returning gave a verdict of guilty on all counts. Custine could not withhold an expression of despair when sentence of death was passed. He recovered his self-possession, however, and wrote a touching letter to

Digitized by Google

his son, then a prisoner at La Force. The execution was appointed to take place on the following day, August 28, at twelve. At nine o'clock Charles Henri Sanson entered Custine's prison. He found him on his knees, praying with the Abbé Lothringer, metropolitan vicar, whose assistance he had asked for. The priest requested my father to wait outside for a few minutes. Shortly after, Custine himself came to fetch him. Custine's countenance was firm; but it was easy to perceive that he was labouring under nervous prostration. His hair was cut; after which he assumed his uniform, saying that it was thus a French general should die. He asked that his hands should only be tied at the foot of the scaffold, and his petition was granted.

He walked to the cart so rapidly that the Abbé Lothringer and the executioners had some trouble in keeping up with him. When the gloomy procession appeared in the street, there was as usual a loud clamour. General Custine turned very pale, and said several times: 'These are the very people who used to applaud my victories!' As the cries became more vociferous, he added: 'This is the reward of my services!' and the name of Dumouriez came to his lips. The Abbé Lothringer besought him to be resigned. Custine's eyes filled with tears, and he began to read in the prayer-book offered to him by the priest.

The stoicism displayed by Charlotte Corday had spoilt the mob. Her gentle and contemptuous attitude was well remembered, and the people doubtless expected that the general of their army would exhibit a disdain

Digitized by Google

for death still more superb. The sight of a pale old man plunged in prayer, instead of what was expected, excited popular fury, and cries and curses became universal.

When the cart halted before the scaffold, Custine turned round, not to see the instrument of death. His features were so discomposed that my grandfather thought he was going to faint; the priest was under the same impression, for he bent towards the general's ear, and said to him in German: 'General, 'tis only death, which you defied a hundred times on the battle-field; and yet you were not then, as you are now, ready to appear before your God.' The general shook his head, and then taking his confessor's hand: 'You are right,' said he, 'and yet I am sorry a Prussian cannon ball did not do the work.' He then looked at the knife, which glittered under the mid-day sun. While his hands were being tied, he asked that he should be allowed to hold the prayer-book to the last. He then ascended with a firm step the steps of the scaffold, and his head fell under the knife, into the basket, a few seconds after.

It may be justifiable to doubt Custine's genius as a general; but it is impossible to deny him the first of military virtues, courage; his was proverbial in the French army. And yet he did not encounter death with the calm bravery which we found among ordinary citizens, whose profession and habits were quite peaceful, and even among women. This phenomenon shows the difference that exists between nervous excitement, which can make a hero of a man, and the manly forti-

Digitized by Google

tude which remains unshaken, even by the most hideous of deaths. It shows the superiority of civil over military courage.

The importance of Custine's trial had retarded the progress of another case, that of twenty-one inhabitants of Rouen, accused of having incited their countrymen to civil war, of having harboured the white cockade, and sawed the tree of liberty. This interesting case was resumed on the morrow of the general's death. Ten, among whom were two women, were sentenced to death and guillotined.[1]

The 16th of Vendémiaire following was a noteworthy day in the history I am now writing. Until then the Republic had only struck its enemies; on the 16th of Vendémiaire she began her self-destruction by slaying one of those who had powerfully contributed to her establishment. Gorsas, deputy and journalist, whose lawsuit with my grandfather the reader may remember, was the first member of the Convention who ascended the scaffold, where the most illustrious among his colleagues were soon to follow him. Gorsas had evaded the arrest decreed on June 2 against him and his friends of the Gironde. Pethion, Barbaroux, Louvet, and several others had gone into the provinces to raise an insurrection against the autocracy of the capital; Gorsas had refused to join them. He was an ardent writer, a tribune of the press, and he understood that his

[1] Here the translator has omitted a long list of executions which, beyond testifying to the completeness of the present Memoirs, offer no particular interest.

Digitized by Google

strength was in Paris. The decree of July 28, describing as a crime the contempt showed by the Girondins for the so-called national authority, had declared them outlaws. Peril could not induce Gorsas to leave Paris; for three months he lived in hiding, but he was at length arrested. He was taken before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and from thence to the scaffold.

Gorsas was brave to the last. When my grandfather saw his former enemy, he tried to avoid being seen by him; but Gorsas espied him at the foot of the scaffold, and cried to him in a loud voice:

'Why do you stand aside, Citizen Sanson? Come and enjoy your triumph. We thought we were overthrowing the Monarchy: we have only founded your reign.'

My grandfather made no reply and looked down. Indeed he was beginning to have enough of his royalty.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE QUEEN.

HOWEVER enthusiastic a great many people may be respecting the general results of the Revolution, it seems to me impossible to think without some emotion of a Queen who in less than a year was deprived of her throne and liberty—of a woman widowed by the executioner's axe, separated from her children, and treated with revolting indignity. When, in my young days, I used to accompany my father to the Conciergerie prison, I never passed before the unfortunate Queen's cell without feeling deeply moved. When I looked at the black and rusty door behind which Marie Antoinette had been imprisoned for two months, I hastily walked away, seeing in my mind's eye the awful tragedy which had been partly enacted in the gloomy prison.

After the death of Louis XVI. the royal captives of the Temple had not been forgotten. The hatred of the Parisians against the King was wholly political; it was aimed at the King, not at the man. Against Marie Antoinette popular hatred was both political and personal. The Queen had found implacable enemies, not

Digitized by Google

only among the Revolutionists who wished to overthrow the Monarchy, but among her own courtiers, and even in the ranks of her own family. None could forgive her independent mind, her elegant tastes, her liking for amusements forbidden by etiquette. By traducing her sentiments, by incriminating her acts, her enemies had rendered her odious to all other women. The Revolutionists knew the Queen to be far more energetic than Louis XVI.; they understood that if some resistance was to be offered to their designs, such resistance must come from Marie Antoinette, and they gave her out as the bitterest enemy of liberty. They styled her the ghoul of France, and the accomplice of the foreigner. Unanimity in hostile feelings was the cause of unanimity in the calumnies wherewith the Queen was assailed. On several occasions the name of the captive Queen was pronounced in the Convention, and then the violent party of which Hébert was leader asked for the arraignment of the widow of Capet.

Public opinion was getting too strong for the Convention. On August 4 a decree sent her before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and on the 14th of the same month she was sentenced to death, after a trial which is too well known for me to recall the circumstances which attended the melancholy affair. I have occasionally related at length the events of a criminal's career which led to the executioner's intervention, but only when I might reasonably think that the reader was not previously acquainted with them. In Marie Antoinette's case, my relation can only dwell upon the time that

Digitized by Google

elapsed between her condemnation and execution. Charles Henri Sanson did not leave us a complete account of the Queen's death; and the omission, which I cannot explain, is very much to be regretted. The following relation, however, I had from my father, who had then reached manhood, and who usually assisted my grandfather in the discharge of his functions.

Charles Henri Sanson was present at the Queen's trial. No sooner was the verdict given than he tapped at the door of Fouquier-Tinville's closet. Fouquier told him to come in, and he found himself in the presence of Herman, the president of the court, Renaudin, a judge, Nicolas, also a judge, and Fabricius Paris, the clerk of the court. Fouquier immediately enquired whether preparations for the *fête* (that was the word he used) were complete. Charles Henri Sanson having responded that his duty was to await the decisions of Justice, and not anticipate them, Fouquier upbraided him with his usual violence. Fabricius, the clerk, mingled his merry jokes with the public prosecutor's invectives. The conversation was assuming a disagreeable turn. To put an end to it, my grandfather asked for an order to procure a closed carriage similar to that in which the King had been taken to the guillotine. This request thoroughly exasperated Fouquier-Tinville; he answered that Charles Henri himself deserved to perish on the scaffold for daring to make such a suggestion, and that a cart was quite good enough for the Austrian. But Renaudin observed that before taking any decision it was desirable to consult the Committee of Public Safety, or some of its

Digitized by Google

members; and after some discussion Fouquier acquiesced. Nourry, *alias* Grammont, formerly an actor of the Montansier Theatre, had just entered. He undertook the errand, and on returning said that he had consulted Robespierre and Collot, but that neither would give an opinion on the matter, on the plea that Fouquier had power to act as he thought fit. It was finally decided that the Queen should be taken to the scaffold in a cart.

It was five o'clock in the morning when my grandfather left the Tribunal. All were asleep when he entered his house. He made only a short appearance in his bedroom, and was walking out on tiptoe, for fear of waking his wife, when the latter, who slept lightly, called him to her bedside, and, on looking in his face, she at once guessed the issue of the Queen's trial. She was so deeply affected that Charles Henri had to call his son to his assistance. He dared not let any one else see her. Her tears were a crime in the eyes of the man in power, and most of his assistants tried to obliterate the dishonour of their profession by the fervency of their democratic opinions.

This occurrence so unmanned Charles Henri Sanson, that his son prepared to accompany him. So they went together to the Place de la Révolution, to see that the scaffold was in good order; and from thence they repaired to the Conciergerie, where they arrived at ten o'clock. The prison was already surrounded by armed men. My father and grandfather were joined by citizen Eustache Nappier, one of the ushers of the Revolu-

Digitized by Google

tionary Tribunal, who was to be present throughout the proceedings.

They entered the prison, and were taken to the Queen's presence. Marie Antoinette was in the 'Hall of the Dead,' reclining on a seat, her head against the wall; the two gendarmes who watched her were standing within a few steps, with Bault, the turnkey, whose daughter was standing before Marie Antoinette, weeping bitterly.

When the messengers of death entered, the Queen rose and made a step to meet them, but she was stopped by Bault's daughter, whom she embraced with much tenderness. She wore a white dress; a white handkerchief covered her shoulders; and her hair was surmounted by a cap tied with a black ribbon. She was pale, but not out of apprehension, for her lips were red and her eyes brilliant.

My grandfather and father took their hats off; many others bowed; Nappier the usher, and a few gendarmes, were the only persons who abstained from giving so slight a token of deference. Before any one had time to speak, the Queen advanced, and in a dry voice she said:

'Gentlemen, I am ready. We can set out.'

Charles Henri Sanson observed that a few formalities had yet to be fulfilled. Marie Antoinette showed the back of her neck, where the hair had been cut.

'That will do, I think?' said she to him.

At the same time she held out her hands for him to bind them. While my father was so occupied, the Abbé

Digitized by Google

Lothringer entered the room and asked her leave to accompany her. The abbé, who had taken the oath of fidelity to the Republic, had already proffered his services, but they had been declined. His repeated request visibly displeased the Queen, who however answered:

'You can come with me if you like.'

The *cortége* immediately moved forward. The gendarmes preceded the queen, by whose side was the abbé; behind came the clerk, the executioners, and more gendarmes.

On reaching the court, Marie Antoinette saw the cart; she came to a sudden halt, and a strong feeling of horror appeared on her features. She, however, mastered her emotion, and was helped up by my grandfather and his son. The gates were slowly opened, and the Queen of France appeared before the people. There was an immense clamour of maledictions, a torrent of curses, and cries of 'Death!' The crowd was so compact that the cart could hardly move, and the horse reared and backed. There was so terrible a moment of confusion that both my grandfather and father rose and placed themselves before Marie Antoinette. At two different points men had broken through the rank of the escort, and instead of driving them back, or trying to calm popular effervescence, the gendarmes joined in their vociferations. The son of Nourry-Grammont, who, like his father, was an officer in the army, had the cowardice to threaten the Queen's face with his clenched fist. The Abbé Lothringer pushed him back, and upbraided him for his unworthy conduct.

Digitized by Google

This scene lasted two or three minutes. Never, my father often told me, did Marie Antoinette appear more dignified than she did then. Grammont, the father, went forward with a few horsemen and cleared the way. From time to time cries and curses partly subsided. A few cries of '*Death to the Austrian! Death to Madame Veto!*' rose from the crowd; but these exclamations became rarer and rarer.

Marie Antoinette stood erect in the cart; the Abbé Lothringer was speaking to her, but she did not answer, and did not even seem to hear him. When the Palais Egalité was passed, she began to manifest some uneasiness. She looked at the numbers of the houses with more than commonplace curiosity. The Queen had foreseen that no priest of her religion would be allowed to accompany her; and a proscribed ecclesiastic, with whom she had communicated, had promised to be in a house of the Rue St. Honoré on the day of the execution, and to give her from a window absolution *in extremis*. The number of the house had been designated to Marie Antoinette, and that was what she was looking for. She discovered it; and then, at a sign which she alone understood, having recognised the priest, she bent her head and prayed. After this she breathed more freely, and a smile came to her lips.

On reaching the Place de la Révolution, the cart halted precisely opposite the large walk of the Tuileries; for a few moments the Queen was plunged in painful contemplation; her colour faded away, her eyelids trembled, and she was heard to murmur:

Digitized by Google

'My daughter! my children!'

The sight of the scaffold recalled her to herself, and she prepared to descend. My grandfather and my father supported her. As she placed her foot on the ground, Charles Henri Sanson, who was bending towards her, said in her ear:

'Have courage, Madame!'

The Queen looked round, as if surprised to find pity in the heart of the man who was about to put her to death, and answered:

'Thank you, sir, thank you.'

A few yards separated the cart from the guillotine. My father offered to continue to support her, but she declined, saying:

'No; I am, thank Heaven, strong enough to walk that short distance.'

She advanced slowly, but with a firm step, and mounted the scaffold as majestically as if the steps of the guillotine had been those of the grand staircase at Versailles.

Her arrival on the platform produced some confusion. The Abbé Lothringer, who had followed her, was going on with his useless exhortations. My father thrust him aside, wishing to finish the execution without the loss of a second. The assistants took possession of Marie Antoinette. While they were tying her down to the weigh-plank, she exclaimed, in a loud voice:

'Farewell, my children; I am going to join your father.'

The plank was replaced in its original position,

Digitized by Google

and the knife came down upon the neck with a heavy thump.

Some cries of '*Vive la République!*' were heard around the scaffold, and Grammont ordered Charles Henri to show the head to the people. One of the assistants went through the horrible formality. The Queen's body was placed in a coffin of common wood and burnt in quick-lime, in the cemetery of La Madeleine. Her clothing was given to the poor.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GIRONDINS.

AFTER the Queen's trial came that of the inhabitants of Armentières, charged with conspiracy with the enemy, with the purpose of betraying the town into their hands. Six prisoners were discharged: but Pierre François Malingié, formerly *juge-de-paix* of Armentières; Pellerin Guy Jouar, merchant; Joseph Delattre, merchant; and Paul François Clarisse, hatter, were sentenced to capital punishment, and executed on the 27th of Vendémiaire.

On the 1st of Brumaire (October 22) came the turn of Louis Armand Pernon, manager of the national pottery, charged with having corresponded with the rebels of Lyons; and on the 2nd that of Pierre Hippolyte Pastourel, a priest.

On the 5th the Tribunal sent an emigré, Jacques André François d'Ouzonville, and his wife, to the guillotine. Public attention at the time forsook the Place de la Révolution, engrossed as it was by a trial of the highest importance—that of the Girondins.

This trial was as loudly asked for by the clubs and the Commune as that of the Queen had been; but the charge

Digitized by Google

against the deputies, arrested on account of their moderate and just republicanism, was difficult to make out. Those of the Girondins who had not taken to flight had committed no reprehensible act. In this predicament it was resolved to consider their opinions as being criminal, and the accusation was drawn up. Fouquier-Tinville received it on the 12th of Brumaire, and on the 13th the prisoners were transferred from the Prison des Carmes to la Conciergerie, the last halting-place on the way to the scaffold.

The flight of Pétion, Barbaroux, Guadet, and a few others, had left a gap in the ranks of the twenty arraigned deputies; to complete the figure consecrated by the insurrection of June 2, other deputies were chosen among those who had since then been arrested, and twenty-one prisoners, who with Gorsas (who had been executed some time before) made up the requisite number, appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

These were:

Jean Pierre Brissot, aged 39, man of letters and deputy of Eure-et-Loire.

Pierre Victorin Vergniaud, aged 35, deputy of la Gironde.

Arnaud Gensonné, aged 35, deputy of la Gironde.

Claude Romain Loze Duperret, aged 46, deputy of Bouches-du-Rhône.

Jean Louis Carra, aged 50, man of letters and deputy of Saone-et-Loire.

Jean François Martin Gardien, aged 39, deputy of Indre-et-Loire.

Digitized by Google

Charles Eléonore Dufriche Valazé, aged 42, deputy of Orne.

Jean Duprat, aged 38, deputy of Bouches-du-Rhône.

Charles Alexis Bruslard (formerly Marquis de Sillery), aged 57, deputy of la Somme.

Charles Fauchet, aged 49 (formerly a bishop), deputy of Calvados.

Jean François Ducos, aged 28, man of letters, deputy of la Gironde.

Marie David Lasource, aged, 39, deputy of Tarn.

Benoît Lesterpt-Beauvais, aged 43, deputy of Haute-Vienne.

Gaspard Du Chastel, aged 27, deputy of Deux-Sèvres.

Pierre Mainvieille, aged 28, deputy of Bouches-du-Rhône.

Jacques Lacase, aged 42, deputy of la Gironde.

Pierre Lehardy, aged 35, deputy of Morbihan.

Jacques Boileau, aged 41, deputy of Yonne.

Charles Louis Antiboul, aged 40, deputy of Var.

Louis François Sébastin Vigié, aged 36, deputy of Mayenne-et-Loire.

On the 3rd of Brumaire they appeared before the Tribunal. Fabricius, the clerk of the court, read the indictment, in which it was attempted to show that the accused had conspired against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic and the safety of the nation. Most of the witnesses heard for the prosecution were those who had directed the revolutionary movement of May 31, and whose hostility to the Girondins was manifest

Digitized by Google

and well known. The trial, which lasted several days, was a kind of farce. It is not within my province to relate it, and I will therefore pass it over. When the jury had delivered a verdict of guilty against all the arraigned Girondins, the latter were brought in to receive sentence. They had shown indomitable courage during the whole trial, and few among them yielded to despair or discouragement. Boileau threw up his hat, exclaiming: 'I die innocent.' Sillery, who was lame, threw away his crutches and said: 'This day is the finest in my life.' Boyer Fonfrède embraced Ducos, his brother-in-law, saying: 'My friend, I led you to this.' Fauchet and Duprat were rather cast down; but Carra retained his self-possession; Lasource addressed a few words to the jury, that could not be heard in the tumult then prevailing; as to Vergniaud, the noblest and most eloquent of all, he lost nothing of the admirable serenity he had displayed throughout the ordeal; then all rose simultaneously, crying '*Vive la République!* we are innocent!' A cry of death, however, rose higher than this clamour; a voice said 'I am dying.' The president of the Tribunal directed the gendarmes to lead away the prisoners. One, however, did not move; it was Dufriche Valazé who had said 'I am dying,' after stabbing himself to the heart.

This painful scene had created the utmost confusion. Camille Desmoulins, who was present, ran out of the hall in an agony of grief, charging himself with the death of the Girondins. The foreman of the jury was as pale as death. Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor, alone was calm.

Digitized by Google

In a cold voice he asked that Valazé's corpse should be placed in one of the executioner's carts, to be burned with the bodies of his 'accomplices' after execution.

So early as the 8th of Brumaire, that is to say four days before the actual condemnation of the Girondins, Fouquier-Tinville had directed the executioner to provide for the emergency of an extraordinary execution. My grandfather had therefore sought assistants. By a singular contrast, which shows the instinctive horror of the masses for the punishment which was then so frequently inflicted, he had the greatest difficulty in recruiting auxiliaries for the service of the scaffold. Fouquier had informed my grandfather that at least twelve assistants were necessary. Charles Henri, with the greatest trouble, found three men; and as he was going in quest of another man, a *protégé* of Hébert presented himself, and proposed to act as executioner's valet. This individual's garrulity and his grimacing and sinister countenance displeased Charles Henri Sanson, who refused to engage him. One of those who were present at the interview assured my grandfather that the man was a mountebank, who, under the name of Jacot, performed on the Boulevard du Temple, and Charles Henri was congratulating himself on having got rid of him, when Fouquier-Tinville summoned him to his presence, and, after charging him with neglect of duty, ordered him to engage Jacot.

On the following day, 10th Brumaire (October 30), my grandfather passed his auxiliaries in review. They consisted of ten assistants, properly speaking, and five

Digitized by Google

cart drivers, with their carts. Hébert's *protégé* was present. Charles Henri Sanson thought he perceived a red waistcoat under his *carmagnole*, but he paid little attention to the circumstance. At eight o'clock in the morning he set out for the Conciergerie with my father and six assistants; two more went to the Place de la Révolution, and two remained to take care of the carts; Jacot was one of the latter. A great many soldiers already surrounded the prison. Two clerks of the Tribunal, Nappier and Monet (the same who had attended Charlotte Corday to the scaffold), had already arrived, and were waiting for the executioner in the porter's lodge. They repaired together to the Palais de Justice, where they took their final orders; and then they prepared to appear before the unfortunate Girondins.

It had been decided that preparations for the execution should take place in the parlour of the prison—a lofty dark hall, which people were beginning to call the 'Hall of the Dead,' since it served as an antechamber of the scaffold. When my grandfather entered with his men and the gendarmes, the convicts were already assembled there. They formed several groups; some were pacing the hall; others formed circles; all of them spoke with much animation, like friends who were about to be separated by a long voyage. Brulard, Sillery, and Bishop Fauchet, conversed in a low voice in a dark corner; Mainvieille was writing on his knees. The corpse of Valazé had been deposited on three stools before the window.

At the sight of the sinister *cortége*, they uttered a confused exclamation, and some of them rushed into

Digitized by Google

each other's arms and embraced. Nappier, the clerk, called out the names of the convicts, and at each name one of the Girondins answered 'Present!' and several added a few words of irony.

'Present!' said Vergniaud; 'if our blood can cement liberty, we welcome you.'

'I don't like long speeches; I am no adept in the art of outraging reason and justice,' cried Ducos, sarcastically quoting Robespierre's very words. Nappier having roughly interrupted him, he added, with a burst of laughter: 'Well, present, without phrases.'

Duperret, instead of answering, impeached the town of Paris, saying that its representatives were murdering the most devoted patriots. Brissot, one of the most distinguished Girondins, was gloomy; Vergniaud spoke to him for some time with vehemence, but all that could be heard of what he said were the often repeated words of republic and liberty. When the nominal appeal was terminated, all the convicts, with equal enthusiasm, cried '*Vive la République!*'

The sight of these men, whose last cry was a glorification of the Republic in the name of which they were being sent to the guillotine, was awful and impressive. Often has my father, when he was giving me the above details, repeated that no execution ever moved him more. The toilet began; during this preliminary preparation the Girondins remained serene and self-possessed. My grandfather and my father cut their hair; the assistants bound their hands. They came forward without any affectation or bravado, and continued to converse,

Digitized by Google

As Duprat was about to sit down on the stool, Mainvieille approached, holding the letter he had been writing. He handed it to his companion, together with a pen, saying to my father:

'You will allow us to devote a few moments to our family affairs, I hope?'

Duprat then added a few words to the letter, which was addressed to a woman whom they both loved.

Ducos was the last who underwent the toilette, and it was my father who cut his hair. Fonfrède, his brother-in-law, stood behind him. During the operation a few hairs, which were caught between the scissors, were torn out. Ducos could not refrain from making a movement, and while his hands were being tied he said to my father:

'I hope the edge of your guillotine is sharper than your scissors!'

When all were ready, my grandfather gave the signal for departure. Some of the gendarmes had already descended the stairs which led to the entrance of the prison. The convicts pressed around Vergniaud, and seemed to wish to confer upon him the honour of marching first; but Vergniaud, pointing to Valazé's body, which two assistants were placing on a tressel: '*He* preceded us in death,' said he in a grave voice; 'he must show us the way.'

All then stood back at his bidding, and the corpse was borne away. The Girondins followed. Nappier, the clerk of the court, had arranged that they should be placed in the carts according to the order of their names

Digitized by Google

in the judgment; but the confusion which attended the departure prevented the execution of a measure which might have deprived some of the Girondins of the supreme consolation of confiding their last thoughts to a personal friend. They entered the carts they preferred, and found themselves thus distributed: Gensonné, Carra, Duperret, Lasource, and Duchâtel in the first cart; Brissot, Vergniaud, Ducos, Boyer-Fonfrède, and Vigié in the second; Gardien, Mainvieille, Duprat, Fauchet, Sillery, and Lasource, in the third; Antiboul, Boileau, Lehardy, and Beauvais in the fourth. My grandfather and my father were in the first two carts, and an assistant in each of the other carts; each of them held the end of the cord which communicated with the wrists of the convicts. Contrary to what has been said by some historians, there was no convict in the fifth cart, which was reserved for the body of Valazé.

The sky was dark and rainy; a foggy atmosphere covered the town; nevertheless, an immense crowd filled the streets. More curiosity than passion was displayed by the public. Few were conscious of the importance of the sacrifice which was about to be made; but few also seemed to share the violent sentiments expressed at the Club des Jacobins and in the Convention. Silence was generally preserved on the way; but, as usually occurred when illustrious victims were being led to death, a gang of men and women had mingled with the *cortége*, and gave vent to furious exclamations. Scarcely had the carts reached the Quai de la Conciergerie when my grandfather became aware that his new assistant, Jacot, had taken off his *carmag-*

Digitized by Google

nole, under which he wore a mountebank's costume; the wretch had mounted the horse of the cart entrusted to him, and was going through a series of feats of equitation, which he only interrupted to address to the crowd ironical remarks relating to the convicts. Charles Henri immediately descended, and endeavoured to drive Jacot away; but the crowd, and even the gendarmes, sided with the mountebank, and my grandfather was obliged to return to his cart amidst groans and hisses. The cries of '*Vive la République!*' were frequently uttered on the way. Mainvieille and Duprat repeated with the crowd: '*Vive la République!*' On two or three occasions only came forth the cry: 'Death to traitors!' The Girondins heard it without anger; but a stentorian voice, which came from the fourth cart, exclaimed: 'The Republic! You shall not have it!' Vergniaud, behind whom was my father, heard the exclamation, and cried: 'Do not say that; the Republic costs us dear enough for us to carry away the hope that it shall not be overthrown.'

Not one showed signs of weakness. Vergniaud was grave and collected, and endeavoured to dispel the sinister presentiments of Brissot, who seemed to think that the Republic could not survive their death. Ducos and Boyer-Fonfrède conversed in a low voice; my father saw tears on the cheeks of the latter. The convicts of the other carts were not less dignified. Twice they struck up the *Marseillaise*. Ducos, who was only twenty-seven years old, seemed to become more lively and caustic as the fatal moment was drawing near. As

Digitized by Google

the carts reached the Place de la Révolution, he said, looking at the guillotine:

'What a pity it is that the Convention did not decree the unity and indivisibility of our persons!'

After being placed in a file before the scaffold, between two rows of gendarmes, the Girondins embraced, and were heard encouraging each other to die bravely, without fear or reproach, as they had lived. Then they once more struck up the *Marseillaise*, and the sacrifice began.

Sillery was the first to appear on the platform. He walked around the scaffold, and bowed four times to the crowd. He suffered from paralysis and walked with difficulty. One of the assistants having told him to be quick, he answered:

'Can't you wait a moment? I wait also, and yet I am in a greater hurry than you are.'

As the knife came down, the chorus of the convicts became stronger. After Sillery came Fauchet; Carra, Lesterpt-Beauvais, Duperret, and Lacase followed.

Charles Henri Sanson was superintending the execution. Fermin, the head assistant, was pulling the rope. My father watched over the removal of the bodies, which were thrown, two by two, into baskets prepared behind the guillotine. But when six heads had fallen, the baskets and the weigh-planks were so saturated that the contact of the blood must have been more horrible than death itself to those who were to follow. Charles Henri Sanson ordered the two assistants to throw pails of water over the plank, and to sponge it after each execution.

The ranks of the convicts were beginning to thin.

Digitized by Google

Their chants were diminishing in intensity, but not in vigour. Boileau, Antiboul, Gardien, Lasource, Brissot, one after the other ascended the steps of the scaffold. While Lehardy was being bound to the plank, he cried three times: '*Vive la République!*' Duprat was executed after him. Before leaving his friends, Ducos embraced Fonfrède, his brother-in-law; in ascending the steps, he said to my father:

'Ah! would that your guillotine could kill me at the same time as my brother!'

He was still speaking when the knife came down upon his neck.

Only six Girondins now remained; but they went on singing. Gensonné, Mainvieille, Boyer-Fonfrède, and Duchâtel were executed. Vergniaud and Vigié were still alive. It has been asserted that Vergniaud was the last who died. This is an error. It had been hoped that some of the Girondins would show some symptom of fear, and those who had exhibited the greatest fortitude had been reserved for the last. Nappier, the clerk, was about to point to Vigié as the next victim, when he thought he detected a tremor in his voice; he immediately turned to Vergniaud and told him to come forward. Nappier doubtless thought that Vigié, being deprived of the support of his friend, would lose courage, and that the horrible hecatomb would thus finish by an exhibition of fear. Nothing of the kind took place. When Vergniaud's corpse had joined those of his friends, Vigié came forward with the pride of a conqueror. He was still singing while they were binding him to the plank.

Digitized by Google

The execution lasted forty-three minutes; that is, a little more than two minutes for each convict.

In the evening of the same day, Charles Henri Sanson complained to Fouquier of the extraordinary conduct of Hébert's *protégé* in the hope of getting rid of the ruffian; he argued that the way to beget sympathy for the condemned was to insult prisoners, as Jacot had done. Fouquier paid no attention to my grandfather's recriminations, and asked him why he did not with his own hand pull the rope which communicated with the knife. My grandfather replied that under the former *régime* it was customary for the executioner to carry out himself sentences entailing decapitation, but that since a machine had been substituted for human strength and dexterity, the most important duty was to watch the preparations and the carrying out of an execution; that the slightest neglect could give rise to frightful accidents; and that, as he was personally responsible, it was only natural that he should see himself to the superintendence.

Fouquier-Tinville appeared satisfied with these reasons; but in sending my grandfather away, he told him that he should keep an eye upon him, and added, with a significant gesture, that if he did not discharge his duties not only as an experienced executioner, but as a patriot, he, Sanson, might very well change parts, and be executed himself.

The result of this conversation was that Jacot was maintained as my grandfather's assistant; and the man's sinister grimaces were repeated in most important executions, to the great satisfaction of the mob.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ADAM LUX.—THE DUKE OF ORLEANS.

FROM the time of the death of the Girondins, executions became more and more frequent; the real Reign of Terror began. Not a day passed without the guillotine being used, and my grandfather and my father had scarcely breathing time. Three executions took place on the 11th of Brumaire, and three more on the 12th. On the 13th the Revolutionary Tribunal sent to the scaffold Olympe de Gouges, a woman famous for her talents and courage. She had hailed the Revolution with delight; but pity soon invaded her heart, and in a fit of generous boldness she wrote to the Convention, to ask leave to defend the King. She then attacked the revolutionary party with such violence that the papers refused to accept any more of her contributions, and she was obliged to use placards as a medium of communication with the public. For this she was incarcerated for five months, tried, and executed.

On the 14th two convicts appeared on the guillotine. One was a woman called Marie Madeleine Contelet. She had been found in possession of a letter in which the Commune and the Convention were spoken of con-

Digitized by Google

temptuously. This was enough to ensure a condemnation to death. The other convict was Adam Lux, sent by the town of Mayence to solicit the annexation of his native town to France. Adam Lux was an enthusiastic dreamer, who judged men in the simplicity of his heart and with the sincerity of faith. He believed that universal regeneration would succeed to the proclamation of the principles of right and justice. Adam Lux was plunged in deep and dark despair, and was thinking of committing suicide, when he saw Charlotte Corday. He had sought in vain for liberty, but the tenderness which filled his mystic heart could not remain unquenched; he gave himself to the priestess as he had given himself to the goddess. Full of faith in this extraordinary posthumous love, he only wished to join Charlotte in death, and he lost no opportunity of impeaching and attacking the Montagne. He was soon arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Nor was he unworthy of Charlotte Corday. After the act of accusation had been read to him, he said to Fouquier-Tinville: 'I am a stranger to your laws as well as to your crimes; if I have deserved to perish, it is not among the French that I should suffer.' When sentence was passed he exclaimed: 'At last I shall be free!' He dressed himself with much care to proceed to the guillotine, as if hoping that Charlotte Corday's spirit was waiting for him over the scaffold. His female companion was executed first. Hardly was the body removed when Adam Lux appeared on the platform, and stretched himself out on the plank, exclaiming 'At last!'

Digitized by Google

On the 15th another woman, named Madeleine Kolly, was executed; on the 16th it was the turn of one of the most famous initiators of the Revolution, Louis Philippe Joseph d'Orléans. It was in vain that this prince had exchanged his title for the significant name of *Egalité*, that he had given to the Revolution a far more awful guarantee by voting the death of his king and relative; he had not succeeded in obliterating the recollection of his birth and immense fortune. Justly hated by the Royalists, he had soon embarrassed the Republicans. The Girondins would not believe that patriotism was the only reason for the democratic conversion of a prince of the blood. Ever since the first meeting of the Convention, they had never ceased to treat him as a pretender. On the other hand, the Montagne was aware that the presence of a Bourbon in its ranks would estrange from it all other revolutionary parties. It was therefore resolved that he should die. Dumouriez's treason was seized upon as the best opportunity for the execution of this design. Arrested April 7, Égalité was transferred to Marseilles on the 12th. He found there his two sons, the Dukes of Montpensier and Beaujolais, who had also been arrested. After an incarceration of six months in the Fort St. Jean, he was led back to Paris on the 2nd of Brumaire, and imprisoned in the Conciergerie.

The death of this troublesome accomplice was so evidently decided beforehand that Fouquier-Tinville did not even try to elaborate an indictment, and used that which had been drawn up against the Girondins, the relentless enemies of Égalité. When the latter heard

Digitized by Google

himself described as a *Brissotin*, when he heard the charge that he had attempted to place the Duke of York on the throne of France, he interrupted the reading, and exclaimed: 'But surely this is a joke!' When the president asked him if he had any answer to make, he said coldly 'that the charges just uttered against him conflicted with each other, and could not possibly be urged against him, since it was well known that he had constantly opposed the system and the measures of the party he was accused of having favoured.'

He was defended with much energy by Charles Voidel; but, as I said before, his death had been considered indispensable, and the Duke of Orleans's popularity was not sufficient to make the jury hesitate upon a measure which they deemed necessary. The Duke heard the sentence without displaying the slightest emotion; and turning towards Antonnelle, the foreman of the jury, who had once been one of his close friends, he said:

'Since you were determined to kill me, you should have devised more plausible pretexts than you have alleged; for you will never persuade any one that I am guilty of the crime for which you put me to death; and you less than anybody else, Antonnelle, for you know me well. Since my fate is decided, I request you not to make me wait until to-morrow, and to order my immediate execution.'

General Coustard, his aide-de-camp, also a member of the Convention, was sentenced to death with him. The Tribunal having granted the Duke's request, Charles

Digitized by Google

Henri Sanson was sent for; and to him the clerk of the Tribunal handed an order of immediate execution, which included two other prisoners condemned on the preceding day: Jacques Nicolas de Laroque, ex-sub-delegate of Mortagne, and Pierre Gondier, stockbroker.

It was half-past three o'clock when my grandfather received this order. As he was about to start with the prisoners, he was told to wait, and a fifth victim was handed over to him. This was a workman named Antoine Brousse.

The Duke of Orleans was pacing the prison parlour when the executioner appeared. He was slightly pale, but otherwise showed no emotion. My grandfather took off his hat, as he always did; but the Duke paid no attention to him. On being asked, however, whether he would allow his hair to be cut, he sat down without making any remark. At that moment the four other victims were brought in. M. de Laroque entered first; he was a fine old man, and his face was of noble cast. As one of the assistants was offering to cut his hair, he took off the wig which covered his bald head, saying: 'This renders your formality useless.' The Duke of Orleans, who until then had been sitting with his back turned, having risen, M. de Laroque recognised him, and strong indignation appeared on the old man's face as he exclaimed:

'I am no longer sorry to leave life since he who has betrayed my country meets with condign punishment; but, sir, I confess I am much humiliated at having to die on the same scaffold as you.'

Digitized by Google

The Duke did not answer, and turned away.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the *cortége* left the Conciergerie. The prince's *sang-froid* did not forsake him; but his courage essentially differed from that displayed by the Girondins and so many other victims; his countenance expressed indifference and disgust. The leader of the escort stopped before the Égalité palace, on the front of which were written the words 'national property.' The prince understood why the halt had been made. He looked for a moment at the abode of his ancestors, and then turned away scornfully.

M. de Laroque was the first whose head fell. He bade farewell to all his companions, except to the Duke of Orleans. Gondier came next, then Coustard, and lastly Brousse.

The prince witnessed these executions without emotion. He appeared in his turn on the platform, shrugged his shoulders, and looked with a proud and haughty air at the people who were hissing him. After taking off his coat, the assistants wished to divest him of his boots, but he resisted, and advanced towards the plank, saying: 'You are losing time; you can take them off at greater leisure when I am dead.' [1]

[1] Forty years later, Louis Philippe, son of Égalité, was proclaimed King of the French.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MADAME ROLAND AND BAILLY.

SIX executions took place on the 17th of Brumaire—those of Rideau, mason; Jean Clain, upholsterer; Julien Cailleau, cooper; Jean Teynière, shoemaker; Florent Ollivier, labourer; and Thomas Herry, labourer—all municipal councillors of Pont-de-Cé, convicted of conspiracy with the rebels of La Vendée.

These unfortunate men were soon to be followed by another illustrious victim. Madame Roland was arrested on May 31, and she appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal on the 18th of Brumaire. Madame Roland had been the soul of the Gironde; the elevation of her intellect, the grace of her wit, the superiority of her views had given her serious influence, not only over her husband, but over the illustrious men who congregated in her drawing-room. This intervention of a woman in politics had excited much anger, both in the press and in the Convention; Madame Roland's caustic *verve*, her just contempt for ambitious mediocrities, had swelled the ranks of her enemies. It was thus that, after the death of her friends, the Girondins, she was violently assailed, and finally arrested and arraigned. The im-

Digitized by Google

peachment was mainly based on her connection with the Girondins. Madame Roland was resigned to her fate, but she could not, without indignation, listen to the insults that were cast upon the memory of her friends, and she attempted to defend them:

'In what time, and among what people do we live!' she exclaimed. 'It is not my business to speak of the men you have proscribed, but I never believed that they had evil intentions, for they gave to this country many proofs of their patriotism, integrity, and devotion. If they were mistaken, their error was virtuous; they may have been misled, but they incurred no dishonour. If it was a crime to wish for their safety, I declare in the face of the world that I am a criminal, and that I joyfully share with them the honour of being persecuted by their enemies. I have, indeed, known well the generous men who were accused of having conspired against their country; they were firm but humane Republicans; they thought that good laws only could make the Republic popular with those who had no confidence in democratic institutions.'

The president of the Tribunal interrupted her, saying that she could not be allowed to praise traitors who had been righteously punished. Madame Roland turned towards the audience and protested against these words; but insulting clamours were the only response to this appeal, and henceforth Madame Roland was disdainfully silent. She was condemned to death. When she heard the sentence, she said, addressing the Tribunal, in a calm and sweet voice:

Digitized by Google

'You judge me worthy of sharing the fate of the great men you have murdered: I will try to show on the scaffold the fortitude they displayed.'

Like the Duke of Orleans, Madame Roland was executed immediately after her trial. With her was Simon François Lamarche, ex-manager of the manufactory of *assignats*. She had very fine black hair, a part of which had to be cut, at which she expressed some concern. My grandfather tried to make her understand, with all kinds of circumlocution, that, if he allowed her to retain her hair, he would expose her to the most fearful torture. She seemed touched by his arguments, and paraphrasing a celebrated expression of Molière's, she said, smiling: 'Strange that humanity should take refuge in such an unlikely person as you!' As her black hair was falling, she rose with much vivacity and exclaimed: 'At least leave me enough for you to hold up my head and show it to the people, if they wish to see it!'

Lamarche, who was about to die in her company, was far from having her self-possession. Madame Roland's last act was one of profound abnegation and charity; she forgot her own fate only to think of her companion's sufferings. She never ceased to console and encourage him. She affected gaiety which could not be in a mother's and a wife's heart, but which she hoped might lessen the horror and fear wherewith Lamarche was filled. Neither the Queen nor the Girondins had given rise to such popular fury as Madame Roland. She heard taunts and invectives with a quiet smile. As

Digitized by Google

to Lamarche, the sight of the guillotine deprived him of the small amount of courage inspired by Madame Roland's words; his face turned livid, and an assistant was obliged to help him up. Madame Roland looked at him with compassion, and said to him:

'I can only spare you the sight of blood; go first, poor man!'

Since the death of the Girondins the public prosecutor fixed the rank and file of execution. Madame Roland, by reason of her sex, had been granted the privilege of dying first. When she told my grandfather that she abandoned to Lamarche the favour of being struck first, he answered that it was impossible; that he had different orders.

'No, no,' replied Madame Roland; 'I am sure you were not ordered to refuse a woman's last request.'

Charles Henri Sanson had not the courage to persist. Lamarche was guillotined, and Madame Roland saw his head fall without a shudder. She then advanced and gave herself up to my grandfather's assistants.

Well-known victims continued to appear on the scaffold. The 21st of Brumaire saw the death of another founder of the Republic—Bailly. The circumstances which preceded and attended his execution were so horrible that some historians, hostile to the Revolution, have grossly exaggerated the facts, while Republican historians have endeavoured to attenuate them. The following account of Bailly's death is, I make bold to say, the most accurate that has hitherto been written:

Jean Sylvain Bailly was born in Paris on September

Digitized by Google

15, 1731. He was the son of Jacques Bailly, keeper of the King's paintings, and his ancestors were distinguished artists. His first preferences were for literature, but he forsook letters for science, and became one of the most eminent astronomers of the time. Bailly was elected a deputy for Paris in 1789, and the National Assembly selected him as president. On July 16, 1789, he was appointed mayor of Paris; and his popularity was so great that he accepted this perilous post with confidence; but he was not long in discovering his mistake. Being sincerely constitutional, he assumed the responsibility of the terrible butchery, of which the scene was the Champ de la Fédération. It is now pretty certain that, although he held himself responsible, he had no hand in this sanguinary affair; but there was then every reason to think otherwise, and he was on all sides devoted to popular revenge. He resigned his office, gave up public affairs, and retired in the neighbourhood of Nantes. But in that town, as well as in Paris, he was regarded as a traitor; and as his position was becoming more perilous every day, he wrote to a friend, asking for a place of shelter. His friend prepared one for him in the neighbourhood of Melun. Bailly left Brittany, but fell into the hands of a detachment of the revolutionary army, and was taken to Paris. He appeared before the dreaded Tribunal on the 19th of Brumaire. The massacre of the Champ de Mars was not the only charge brought against Bailly; he was also accused of having excited the conquerors of La Bastille against each other, and of having favoured the King's

Digitized by Google

escape at Varennes. The absurdity of this conjecture was glaring. A considerable number of witnesses were heard; all went against Bailly, and the obvious result was a verdict of guilty, and Bailly was sentenced to death.

I have already stated that the executioner used to call every day on the public prosecutor to take his orders. On the 20th of Brumaire he was told by a clerk of the court that no execution was to take place on that day, and he was dismissed without being apprised of the special preparations of the morrow for poor Bailly's execution. It was only at nine o'clock on the morning of the 21st that Charles Henri was ordered to transfer the guillotine to the Champ de Mars. He lost some time in calling together his assistants, so that it was past ten when he proceeded to the Place de la Révolution. Fouquier-Tinville had selected a spot between the 'Altar of the Country' and the Gros-Caillou for the erection of the scaffold—the very place occupied by the troops when they fired upon the people. On my father devolved the task of removing the instrument of death from its usual quarters. My grandfather gave him his instructions and went to the Conciergerie, where he arrived at half-past eleven o'clock. As he entered the prison he met Hébert, who bowed to him as he passed. Bailly was immediately brought forward. I can assert that the people did not take the initiative in the revolting treatment he met with before execution. The turnkeys of the Conciergerie, who often showed wanton brutality in their dealings with prisoners, treated Bailly with more

Digitized by Google

than usual violence, and this made my father think that they were acting under orders. As Bailly was bending forward one of the men pushed him violently towards another turnkey, who in his turn hustled him into the hands of another, and so on, until the unfortunate man was bruised and out of breath. Bault, the head gaoler, and Nappier, the clerk of the Tribunal, were present and looked on. Charles Henri having asked Bault why he did not interfere, the latter replied, shrugging his shoulders:

'What can I do?'

Nappier laughed and nodded approval. My grandfather then thought of the individual he had met shortly before, and supposed that Hébert had something to do with what was going on. He was not mistaken, for Bault confessed to him afterwards that the deputy *procureur* of the Commune had excited his subordinates against Bailly.

Seeing that the unfortunate man was helpless, Charles Henri told his assistants to bind his hands. The conduct of the turnkeys had in no way disturbed the equanimity of the illustrious *savant*. His firmness had peculiar good nature about it. He answered the disgraceful jokes of the gaolers merely by the words:

'You are hurting me.'

When the executioner's assistants tore him away from his tormenters, he smiled and said:

'I am rather old for that kind of game.'

When he was pinioned, my grandfather advised him to allow his assistants to throw his coat over his

Digitized by Google

shoulders, as the weather was chilly. 'Are you afraid that I should catch a cold?' enquired Bailly.

In his 'History of the Revolution,' M. Thiers asserts that Bailly was led to execution on foot: this assertion is inaccurate. The late mayor of Paris enjoyed the privilege of all persons condemned to die; he was taken to the scaffold in a cart. Behind the cart a red flag was attached, which, according to the tenour of the sentence, was to be burnt before the convict by the executioner.

When the cart appeared on the quay a storm of hisses and groans greeted the prisoner, and my grandfather perceived that the mob was chiefly composed of the worst of the *habitués* of the Place de la Révolution. Bailly was seated; he was conversing with my grandfather with extraordinary tranquility. He spoke of everything, except of himself. He questioned Charles Henri concerning the last moments of Custine, Charlotte Corday, and the Queen; shortly after he asked him what his salary was. When the cart reached the Champs Elysées an assistant came in great haste to speak to my grandfather—the carpenters had forgotten some of the beams which formed the floor of the scaffold. Charles Henri was obliged to return to the Place de la Révolution, and to place these beams in the convict's cart. The halt was not without peril; Bailly stepped out of the cart, and twice the crowd attempted to capture him. At length the *cortége* moved on again, but the pieces of wood which were now in the cart caused great inconvenience to poor Bailly. My grandfather asked him if he would rather walk, and he having accepted they

Digitized by Google

proceeded behind the cart. When, however, the mob saw Bailly again within reach there was another tremendous rush to get at him, and a lad, making his way through the lines, snatched Bailly's coat off his shoulders. The onslaught was so sudden that Bailly fell on his face. The coat was torn into a thousand pieces, and another attempt was made to capture the convict, who was only surrounded by the executioner and his assistants. Bailly, however, was saved from the worst of deaths by the intervention of the gendarmes.

My grandfather hastened to get him again into the cart, but the crowd was raised to frenzy, and a hailstorm of projectiles were hurled at the convict's head. Charles Henri advised Bailly to bend down and shelter himself behind the beams ; but hardly had his head disappeared than the crowd became more violent. Bailly rose to his feet, saying to my grandfather :

'I think you are mistaken ; one should always make head against a storm.' And as Charles Henri was expressing his vexation, he added : 'It would be a pity if I could not die with courage during a quarter of an hour, after learning how to live with honour during fifty-seven years.'

It was half-past one when the cart reached the Champ de Mars. The scaffold was surrounded by three or four thousand men. Charles Henri, seeing the feebleness of his own escort, began to entertain serious fears. He understood that the convict was at the mercy of the howling mob, and hurried towards the scaffold, hoping to conclude the execution before the mob had time to

Digitized by Google

make a raid upon Bailly. When, however, this was seen at large, public indignation ran high against the executioner, and Charles Henri was surrounded by a gang of thirty individuals, one of whom said to him that the ground which had drunk the blood of martyrs could not be stained by the blood of a rascal—that Bailly could not be executed in the Champ de Mars. My grandfather answered that he was bound to obey superior orders. 'Orders!' exclaimed one of the men; 'only the people have the right to give you orders!' Charles Henri having called an officer of gendarmes to ask his advice, a third individual exclaimed: 'You can proclaim martial law if you like; you have the red flag and Bailly within reach; as for us, we will erect the guillotine in its proper place.'

Loud applause followed this sally, and a scene of indescribable confusion ensued. The gendarmes had dispersed; some helped the people in removing the guillotine. My grandfather was separated from the unfortunate Bailly, and he had the greatest trouble to find him again. It was then that really commenced the torture of the poor old man. By the mud which soiled his shirt and face, and by a wound on his forehead, it was easy to infer that he had been struck by these frenzied savages. Men and women were equally ferocious—some raised their clenched fists over an unfortunate man whose hands were bound; others tried to strike him with sticks over their neighbours' heads. Bailly's face was still calm, but he was very pale; as soon as he recognised Charles Henri Sanson he called

Digitized by Google

him to his help—poor Bailly's only friend was his executioner. As my grandfather joined him, he said: 'Ah! I hoped all would be over long ago.'

One of the assistants was still by the prisoner's side; the other assistant had disappeared. Two generous citizens, Beaulieu, and a gendarme named Lebidois, came to my grandfather's assistance. Beaulieu harangued the mob, and to a certain degree pacified it. Perceiving that it was dangerous to remain in the same place, and wishing to give some satisfaction to the crowd, he suggested that Bailly should select himself the spot where the scaffold was to be erected. This suggestion was received with enthusiasm, and Bailly was forthwith led away. Beaulieu held one of his arms, Charles Henri Sanson held the other, and the gendarme and the remaining assistants closely followed them. This event has given rise to the invention which represents Bailly being led round the Champ de Mars carrying the boards of the guillotine.

Bailly was taken to the extremity of the Champ de Mars, near the river side, where the scaffold was at last erected. A drizzling rain was falling; Bailly's only garment was his shirt, which was torn, and barely covered his shoulders. The unfortunate man's teeth chattered with cold. It was then that one of those who pressed around him having said, 'You tremble, Bailly!' he made the famous reply:

'My friend, it is because I feel cold.'

So many tortures had not impaired his courage, but his strength at length failed him, his head fell back, and he almost fainted in the executioner's arms, murmuring:

Digitized by Google

'Water! water!'

A man—a monster I should say—actually threw liquid mud in his face. This outrage roused the indignation of a few, and there rose from the multitude a cry of reprobation. One of the spectators ran to the scaffold and brought back a bottle in which there was a small quantity of wine, which he poured into Bailly's mouth. The old man recovered, and with his beautiful smile said, 'Thank you! Preparations for the execution were now completed, and Bailly was assisted up the steps of the scaffold. 'Be quick, sir; finish me off without delay,' said he to my grandfather. But a formality had yet to be attended to: the sentence said that the red flag was to be burnt by the executioner before the late mayor of Paris. The flag was so wet that much time passed before it could be ignited.

The story which shows the executioner burning the flag under Bailly's nose, and the victim's clothes catching fire, deserves no credence whatever.

These preliminaries tried Bailly's power of resistance, and he was about to faint a second time when my grandfather hurriedly pushed him towards the weigh-plank. While he was strapping him, he kept on encouraging him. Charles Henri then rushed to the rope, and Bailly was heaving a deep sigh of relief when the knife came down and severed his head.

On the 24th Brumaire another man who, like Bailly, had taken a brilliant part in the first movements of the Revolution, Louis Pierre Manuel, passed away from this life. Unlike Bailly, however, he was anything but

Digitized by Google

resigned to his fate; he struggled with the executioner's assistants, and uttered piercing shrieks, which only the fall of the knife interrupted. General Brunet, commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy, was executed on the same day.

The task I had to fulfil in the relation of the dramas of this bloody epoch ends here. My grandfather's diary now begins.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXV.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY.

Brumaire 26.—Executed to-day, Citizen De Cussy, of Caen, who had taken part in the conspiracy of the federalist deputies, and with him Gilbert de Voisin, late president of the ex-parliament, who, having emigrated, was imprudent enough to return to Paris. During the toilet somebody said aloud that if Cussy, who was an adept in coining gold and silver moneys, was about to be guillotined, it was a certain sign that the Republic wanted no other money than paper. After these two came Houchard, formerly general of the Army of the North, who, like an old soldier, did not tremble.

Brumaire 27.—Forgers still give us plenty of work. To-day I led two of them to the Place de la Révolution. Forgery is a misfortune which endangers the lives of many innocent persons. Forgers are so clever that it is difficult to distinguish bad from good paper, and many people who have been deceived cannot resist the temptation of inflicting upon others the loss they have sustained. This evening I met in the Rue de la Tixeranderie a gang of women who were going to the Commune

Digitized by Google

—they wore the red cap; a large crowd followed them, giving cheers which were much like groans. I followed the example, and walked behind the women, for I wanted to know what they intended to complain of. Having met Citizen Nicolas Lelièvre, he took me into the Hôtel-de-Ville. The women also entered, but neither their costume nor their petition were to the taste of Citizen Chaumette, who spoke to them very sensibly, and sent them back to their homes.

Brumaire 28.—This morning we went to the Conciergerie. As I was waiting in the prison parlour, two citizens, who were about to be interrogated, passed through the room; one of these, who I was told was Citizen Boisguyon, a soldier, approached me, and with great demonstrations of politeness, he said to me:

'Is it to the citizen executioner I have the honour of speaking? Is not your scaffold like a ball-room, citizen, and does not the knife, like the violins, begin operations in such a way as not to leave time for two words?'

I gave an affirmative answer.

Then turning towards his companion he said to him: 'You see, Dupré, that I was right, and that you acted your part very badly. We must ask Fouquier-Tinville to allow the citizen executioner to come and superintend our rehearsals.'

The gendarmes led them away, but I heard them laughing. The speaker alluded to a parody of capital punishment which had become the chief amusement of the prisoners.

Digitized by Google

Executed on this day a late deputy of the Constituante, Nicolas Remi Lesueur, of Saint Menehould, and an old soldier who had recruited for the enemy.[1]

Brumaire 29.—Two convicts, Distar de Bellecour, officer, and Charles Duparc, late *employé* at the Tuileries. Nothing particularly interesting.

The 'Section de l'Unité' to-day, Brumaire 30, took away the remnants of the superstition of the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés to the Convention. I saw the procession. At the head of it marched a party of soldiers, then came men wearing sacerdotal vestments over their clothes, and between two files were women and girls dressed in white with tricolour sashes; lastly, I saw hand-barrows wherein were placed vases, pyxes, candlesticks, gold and silver plates, and a box of relics, studded with precious stones. The procession was followed by a band which played the tune of 'Malbrouk' (*sic*). This booty, it is said, is worth two millions.

The Tribunal has given us a holiday; such occasions are rare.

Frimaire 1.—We went to take away poor Citizen Boisguyon, who the other day had made fun of the guillotine. When he was brought to me he said:

'You are in earnest to-day; you will be astonished to see how well I can play my part.'

With him were Girey-Dupré, Brissot's accomplice; he had had his hair cut before being tried, and had appeared before the Tribunal in proper toilet for the

[1] Francois Prix, *alias* Saint-Prix.

Digitized by Google

scaffold. He said, turning round several times before me: 'I hope I am all right.' He was very cheerful. A forger of assignats, Colombier, was also to die. They all three took place in the same cart. The forger was in consternation; he tried to prove to Citizen Boisguyon that he was not guilty. The latter attempted to console him, and said:

'If my dying twice, instead of once, could save you. I would willingly submit to the experiment, for death is of very little consequence to me; but since this is impossible, keep your reasons for the Lord, in whose presence we shall be two hours hence.'

As we were crossing the Rue St. Honoré, two women appeared at a window of Duplay's house, where Citizen Robespierre lives. Girey-Dupré, who was showing the house to Boisguyon, cried at the top of his voice:

'Down with Cromwell! down with the dictator! down with the tyrant!'

Juglet, the officer of gendarmes, tried to silence him, but in vain.

Colombier was executed first, Boisguyon came next. He was quiet to the last. When Girey was on the platform he wanted to address the people, but we had orders to prevent him, and we took hold of him. He cried several times '*Vive la République!*'

Frimaire 4.—We executed Antoine Colnelle de Tontel, late lieutenant-colonel, and Clément Laverdy, formerly superintendent of finances, convicted of having contributed to famine by throwing corn into a pond—nasty day's work. The first-mentioned convict was

Digitized by Google

seventy-two years old, and the other seventy. Both died with courage.

Frimaire 6.—Yesterday the Tribunal tried the individuals accused of having given false evidence; two of the accused were acquitted; the third, Carterau Desormeaux, was condemned to death and executed to-day.

Frimaire 7.—Bread is scarce in town; one must wait for hours before the bakers' shops before one can get some. The women crowd before the shops in the evening, and sometimes wait all night. This sight should be very distressing, but our compatriots turn everything into fun. This evening over five hundred persons were waiting before the baker in our street; although the weather was very chilly, they were singing and laughing. Unfortunately this gaiety is frequently attended with disorder and misconduct, and there are husbands who complain. To-day the Tribunal sent to death Jacques Étienne Marchand, lieutenant of gendarmes; General Nicolas Pollier-Lamarlière; and Étienne Alexis Jacques Anisson, formerly director of the national press.

Frimaire 9.—Five heads fell to-day: two were those of celebrated men, Barnave, and Duport du Tertre, who had been minister of justice. It is said that Citizen Danton tried to save Barnave, but with the new law the denunciation of a child is enough to forfeit a man's life, and no earthly power could save him. Yesterday I saw Citizen Fouquier as he was entering court. The execution was appointed for to-day, but the sitting ended late, and the weather was so bad that it had to be put off to

Digitized by Google

the next day. At eleven o'clock, Barnave, Duport, Citizen Benoît-Grandel—sentenced for writing '*Vive le Roi!*' on an assignat—Citizen Vervitch and his sister, were brought in to be cropped. Barnave and Du Tertre were very brave and quiet. The former came up to me, held out his hands, and said:

'Bind these hands, which were the first to sign the declaration of the rights of man!'

When he was ready, and while Citizeness Vervitch, who was in tears, was being bound, he went up to Duport and spoke to him with animation. Two carts had been provided: the late deputies entered one, with me; the three other convicts occupied the other cart, with Henri.[1] On the way Barnave and Du Tertre went on conversing; they spoke of the Republic, and pretended that its forthcoming ruin would kill liberty altogether. Many cries rose around the carts: one man said to Barnave, in a tone of mockery:

'So young, so eloquent, so brave! what a pity!'

And Barnave answered very proudly: 'You are right, my friend!'

Citizeness Vervitch was executed first; she was carried to the platform half dead with fear. Her brother followed her, then came Benoît-Grandel, Duport, Du Tertre, and Barnave. The latter looked at the guillotine and exclaimed:

'And this is my reward for the good I have done to my country!'

[1] The narrator's son.

Digitized by Google

Frimaire 10.—This morning I had to take two cart-drivers from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution. I had not, as yesterday, to deal with great citizens, but the quantity made up for quality, for there were five in one cart and four in the other—nine in all. In this number I saw a mother and a son. We had to use violence to separate them. When the mother saw her child's hair falling, her shrieks became so heartrending that we could hardly bear to hear them. She spoke to us, saying that the Republic should be content with her head, and that the young man should be reprieved. It was too much for me. Henri took charge of the first cart, and I went in the other cart, but on the way, despite the noise, I could hear the woman groaning and weeping. The convicts who were in my cart turned away, not to see her. The women in the crowd wept, and many loudly expressed their pity. On the Place, and although she was very faint, she burst out again. The son kept on saying that he was glad to die with his mother. She suffered first, and on the platform she told me: 'I am sure he is to be reprieved.'

I think she had an idea that her son had been brought with her merely to frighten her, but that he was not to be executed. I thought it was of no use to contradict her.

Frimaire 11.—Executed Jean Vincenot, innkeeper; Pierre Nicolas Aubry, schoolmaster; and Sebastian Mauduit, wine merchant.

The prettiest woman in Paris came forward to act as our new divinity—Reason. I read in a paper, yester-

Digitized by Google

day, that the goddess is likely to be like a general without soldiers.

Frimaire 12.—Two convicts this morning: Barthélemy Soudre, bootmaker, and Guillaume Jean Flament They were much insulted and laughed at.

Frimaire 13.—Executed Antoine Pierre Léon Dufresne, doctor, for conspiring against the Republic, and Étienne Pierre Garneau for the same crime.

To-day a decree of the Commune has been made known, which enumerates the requisite qualifications for a certificate of civism. To obtain such a certificate is now more difficult than to enter Paradise. One must show that one has been a member of the National Guard since 1790, produce receipts of patriotic contributions from 1791 to 1792; one must have held only one situation for the last two years, &c., &c. Citizen Chaumette is more exacting than St. Peter.

Frimaire 15.—Another deputy has been sent to the guillotine—Kersaint, formerly of the navy. He died bravely, as he had lived. Prayed on the way. A rebel priest, Baptiste Guérin, was executed with him.

Frimaire 16.—To-day, as I was going to the Conciergerie to take Jacques Auguste Rassay, Bernard d'Escourt, and Charlotte Félicité Lappé, the citizen prosecutor asked me to wait. Rivière, the turnkey, told me that they had just arrested Citizen Rabaut Saint Étienne, and his brother Rabaut Pommier, and that Fouquier had immediately ordered the first, who was outlawed, to be identified. The two Rabauts were concealed in the Rue Poissonnière, at a citizen's employed

Digitized by Google

in the offices of the Committee of Public Safety. This citizen had caused to be constructed in his room a wall which so entirely concealed the apartment in which the two brothers were concealed, that it was next to impossible to find them. But he was foolish enough to employ an upholsterer who was working in the offices of the Committee. When he heard Billaud, Amar, and Vouland, who spoke of nothing but death and massacre, the upholsterer became frightened; he thought his life was in jeopardy, and he revealed the secret to Amar, who immediately directed the two brothers to be arrested. Half-an-hour after, the gendarmes returned with Rabaut Saint Étienne and Tirasse. Rabaut was handed over to me without more ado. He died with the greatest pluck.

Frimaire 17.—Madame Dubarry was sentenced to death last night, and executed this morning. We arrived at the hall of justice punctually at nine, but we had to wait, as the convict was with Citizen Denizot, judge, and Citizen Royer, who were taking down her confession. At ten o'clock Citizens Vandenyver, who were three in number—the father and the two sons—all accomplices of Madame Dubarry, and Citizen Bonnardot and Joseph Bruniot, forgers, were brought in. While the above named were being 'arranged'[1] Madame Dubarry came in; her legs could hardly carry her. It was some twenty years since I had seen her, and I

[1] By 'arranged' the executioner means that his victims were being made ready for the scaffold. The expression is too characteristic not to be translated literally.—N. ED.

Digitized by Google

could hardly have known her. Her features had become coarse. When she saw me she shrieked, covered her eyes with her hands, and sank down on her knees, crying: 'Do not kill me!'

She rose to her feet again: 'Where are the judges?' she exclaimed; 'I have not confessed everything; I want to see them!'

Citizens Denizot and Royer were talking with two or three deputies who wished to see the poor woman; they came forward and told her to speak out. She said she had concealed several objects of value in her country house at Luciennes, but she sobbed and broke down at every word. Citizen Royer, who held the pen, kept on saying, 'Is that all?' and tried to make her sign the *procès-verbal*, but she pushed the paper away, saying that she had something to add. She perhaps thought that, in reason of the immense wealth she was giving up, she might be reprieved. At length Citizens Denizot and Royer rose, and said she must submit to the decision of her judges, and make up by her courage for the ignominy of her past life. One of my assistants approached and attempted to cut her hair, but she offered resistance, and the other assistants had great difficulty in binding her hands. She at last submitted, but she cried as I never saw a woman cry before. As many people crowded the quays as when the Queen and the Girondins were executed. Many cries were raised, but her shrieks were louder than any. She said: 'Good citizens, free me! I am innocent; I am of the people,

Digitized by Google

good citizens; do not let them kill me!' No one moved, but men and women hung their heads, and silence prevailed at last; I never saw the people in a more merciful humour. Jacot's grimaces and taunts were of no avail. Dubarry was so faint that my son had to support her. She often spoke to me, begging for mercy. I was more moved than any one, for this unfortunate woman reminded me of my young days, of the time when I knew her, of her worthy father. . . . When she saw the guillotine she became quite excited, and struggled with my assistants and tried to bite them. She was very strong, and three minutes elapsed before they could carry her up to the platform. She was frightful to look at, and to the very last second she struggled. The others were executed after her.

Frimaire 18.—To-day we guillotined Jean-Baptiste Noël, deputy of Les Vosges, outlawed. On the way he spoke of Madame Dubarry, and asked me if the knife had been well cleaned, because it would be disgraceful that a republican's blood should mingle with that of a prostitute. A forger of assignats was executed with him. To-day Clavière, ex-minister, stabbed himself in his cell.

Frimaire 20.—Executed six public purveyors for fraud.

Frimaire 21.—It is no easy matter to get shoes now-a-days. The Convention has decided that shoemakers shall henceforth work for the defenders of the country only. Two convicts to-day.

Frimaire 22.—Citizen Chaumette pursues women of

Digitized by Google

loose life with energy. He ought to begin by allaying public misery, which leads them into the life they lead. To-day we had to deal with two of these women, named Claire Sevin and Catherine Loriot.

Frimaire 23.—Executed one of the great lords of the defunct Monarchy, the *ci-devant* Duc du Châtelet. He did more harm to the Monarchy than its most inveterate enemies. The King gave him the command of the French Guards, in lieu of Biron; Du Châtelet treated them so severely that he facilitated the work of those who were trying to disaffect the soldiers. He was carried to the prison parlour, for in the night he had attempted to destroy himself: having neither knife nor dagger, he tried to kill himself with a sharp piece of glass, but the glass broke, and only made a slight wound; then, thinking that he could die by losing all his blood, he cut his breast several times with the piece which still remained in his possession, but he only succeeded in weakening himself so that his legs could not carry him. Nevertheless, his heart was firm. I proposed in the cart to bind his wounds, and thereby prevent the blood from flowing, but he answered:

'Never mind; it's only saving you work!'

He recovered some strength in the Place de la Révolution, and cried '*Vive le Roi!*'

Frimaire 25.—Two men—François Xavier Bruniau, an ex-royalist magistrate; and Pierre Charles Jacques Pouchon, an *émigré*.

Frimaire 26.—The servants of Montmorency, who has emigrated, were executed to-day.

Digitized by Google

Frimaire 28.—Executed to-day three priests and two *ci-devants*.

Frimaire 31.—The Club des Jacobins continues its purification. It has excluded noblemen and financiers. Antonnelle and Dix-Août,[1] members of the jury; Royer, substitute of the prosecutor; Barrère, Dubois-Crancé, Montant,[2] and many others must be in a predicament. A Jacobin certificate is now more valuable than all possible documents. To-day, as I was passing before Chrétien's café, I was hailed by Citizen Geoffroy, a journalist. I think he must have been very drunk, for he treated me with familiarity, and asked me to drink with him.

Nivôse 1.—I have begun the month by taking three convicts to the guillotine—a priest and two women. These were Julien d'Herville, priest and Jesuit; Marie Anne Poulain, a nun; and Marguerite Bernard, Anne Poulain's servant. They lived together in a house of the Faubourg d'Orléans. The priest said mass in one of the rooms, and several old women came every day to hear it. The local committee had suspicions; it sent a woman to Citizeness Poulain, who told the latter that she knew a priest was concealed in the house, and asked that he should call on her husband who was dying.

[1] Dix-Août, a juror of the Tribunal, was, in reality, the Marquis Leroy de Montflabert. As his title and name were obnoxious to republican ears, he changed it into the date of a great republican victory, which he took as a name.

[2] All these *révolutionnaires* more or less belonged to the aristocracy. Barrère was not of noble descent, but had married the Marquise de Vieuzac, whose name he added to his to distinguish himself from the members of his family bearing his name.

Digitized by Google

Poulain denied that a priest was in hiding in her apartment, and told Julien d'Herville not to go, as she knew that the visitor was republican. But the priest would not listen to her, and was arrested in the house of the creature who had wanted to betray him.

Nivôse 2.—Only one execution to-day.

Nivôse 3.—It appears that Collot d'Herbois, on mission at Lyons, has discarded the guillotine, because it only kills one man at a time, and taken to shooting enemies of the Republic wholesale. A deputation of Lyonese citizens have denounced these doings to the Convention; but their brief has been ill received. Robespierre spoke first; he began by thundering against the aristocracy; but he concluded by proposing that local committees should appoint delegates in order to seek the means of setting at liberty the patriots who might be under lock and key. This is something, and people are grateful for what Robespierre has done.

Nivôse 4.—Madame Dubarry's confession did not save her life, but forfeited that of two persons. This morning I executed Jacques Étienne Laboudie, formerly of the navy, and Denis Morin, Madame Dubarry's valet-de-chambre, sentenced to death, the first for high treason, the second for having concealed money and jewels belonging to the nation. Two other persons, a woman and a plebeian, were executed in their company.

Nivôse 5.—Five executions to-day: Étienne Teyssier, high treason; Michel Kurtz, Pierre Vetzel, Michel Bourg, and Bernard Hourtz. The four last named were Alsa-

Digitized by Google

tians. With the exception of Bourg, who encouraged his companions, all were frightened. It is curious that those whose life is the most tedious and plodding should regret it more than others who have far more reason for caring for it.

Nivôse 6.—Executed a dishonest baker, Nicolas Gornot, of the Rue St. Jacques. All the citizens of his section were around the scaffold and insulted him. With him, Prevost Lacroix, captain in the navy, and Jean Marie Allard, curate of Bagneux. . . .

Nivôse 9.—Dietricht, formerly mayor of Strasburg, was guillotined to-day. While I was binding him he said:

'You have already guillotined many good republicans, but none that were more devoted to the country than I am.'

He was calm and very plucky. He said more than once that his dying wish was that Alsace should never be separated from France. He cried '*Vive la République!*' on the scaffold.

Nivôse 10.—Last month, at the bidding of the prosecutor of the Commune, I had been ordered to remove the blood which oozed through the boards of the guillotine. A hole had been made which had been covered with a trellis-work. But the blood dried too rapidly and could not be absorbed by the earth, and an unbearable smell came from the pit. Last night I directed my assistants to dig deeper. It is said that Chabot, member of the Convention, who was lately arrested, poisoned himself, but that his sufferings were so great that he

Digitized by Google

could not bear them any longer; he called for help, and he has still a few days to live.

Nivôse 11.—Another general of our armies died to-day on the guillotine. Biron had been sentenced yesterday. This morning I led him to the Place de la Révolution. He was in the head-turnkey's room, and was eating oysters with much appetite. On seeing me, he said:

'Allow me to eat this last dozen of oysters!'

I answered that I was at his orders, which made him laugh; and he said:

'No, *morbleu*! it's just the other way; I am at yours!'

He finished his repast with wonderful tranquillity, joking with me, and saying that he should arrive in the other world in time to wish a happy new year to his friends.[1] He was cool to the end. On the way a soldier called out to him:

'Farewell, general!'

Biron answered:

'Good-bye, comrade!'

The soldier was neither beaten nor insulted. Since Madame Dubarry's death citizens are milder with the convicts. If all cried and struggled as she did, the guillotine could not last.

Nivôse 12 (1st of January in the old style) *and* *Nivôse* 13.—Executed Charles Marie Barré, one of those who conspired against the unity of the Republic; Pierre

[1] The 11th of Nivôse was the last day of the year of the old calendary.

Digitized by Google

François de Foller, Charles Louis de Faverolle, nobleman; Agathe Jolivet, a gentlewoman; and Pierre Joachim Van Clemput, priest.

Nivôse 14.—Three women and two men, all belonging to the nobility, were executed to-day.

Nivôse 15.—This morning I gave thirty sols for a copy of the 'Vieux Cordelier,' Camille Desmoulins's paper. It is the fifth number. The number of copies issued was not equal to the demand. Hébert has found a master; and everybody wants to read the tremendous drubbing Camille Desmoulins gives him.[1] Since so good a patriot as Desmoulins has dared to speak of clemency, every face looks happier. It is pretty certain that Danton, Camille's friend, is behind him, and that between them they will put down those who wish the Republic to be baptised on the guillotine every morning.

Meanwhile executions continue. To-day we guillotined the son of Custine; it had been said yesterday that he would be acquitted, and his conviction has taken everybody by surprise. After him, Citizen Ladevize, formerly knight of St. Louis, was put to death.

Nivôse 16.—To-day we executed General Luckner. He was seventy-two years old, and quite broken by age; but he was brave to the last, and died bravely.

Nivôse 17.—To-day I led to the guillotine three individuals of the same name, and yet they were not related to each other. Were they brought together by a mere chance, or was it a joke of one of the secretaries

[1] In the numbers alluded to above, Desmoulins attacked Hébert with extraordinary power and wit.—N. ED.

Digitized by Google

of the prosecution, some of whom are young enough to laugh at what is not funny at all? Their names were Camille Sapi Suschi Bologne, formerly a marquis, and an officer in the army; Jean-Baptiste Bologne, non-commissioned officer in the French Guards; and Nicolas Vincent Bologne, formerly vicar of Bicètre. The *ci-devant* marquis was seventy-eight years of age. With them, Marie Louise de Camp, wife of Gilbert Grassin, gentleman.

Nivôse 19.—Executed Jean Mandrillon, late functionary of the executive power, convicted of treason, in complicity with Brunswick and Dumouriez; Claude Augustin Imbert, member of the Convention, guilty of having fabricated spurious passports; and Catherine Bethringer, convicted of treason.

Nivôse 20.—Marie Aimée Leroy, wife of Joseph Faucher, and Joseph Girouard, printer.

Nivôse 23.—Adrien Lamourette, constitutional bishop of Lyons, was put to death to-day. He showed that he did not fear death. He was much insulted on the way; he blessed the people without showing any bitterness or resentment. People cried to him, in alluding to his speech of July 1792:

'Embrace Charlot,[1] Lamourette; come, embrace Charlot!'

Lamourette turned to me, and said:

'Yes, I embrace in thee humanity; however mad and furious it may be, it is always humanity.'

[1] 'Charlot,' for Charles. This contraction of Charles Henri Sanson's Christian name is still generally applied to the executioner in France. —N. ED.

Digitized by Google

And, in effect, he did embrace me, just as he was about to be strapped to the weigh-plank. After him Jean Joseph Durand, ex-president of the revolutionary committee of Montpellier, was put to death.

Nivôse 27.—Jean Pierre Thiellard, tradesman; Charles Hollier, vicar of the constitutional church of Bordeaux; and Pierre Ducourman, lawyer, were executed this morning. In the cart the three convicts sang a song they had composed in prison. Their singing excited the anger of the people, who threw mud in their faces. Firmness does not mollify all citizens, but rather irritates them, as red irritates bulls. Some convicts return the taunts, and then it is worse. I have already witnessed really disgraceful scenes. Tirasse spoke of the matter to Renaudin, asking that Fouquier should give orders to the gendarmes, and that Jacot, my assistant, should be dismissed. Fouquier answered that he had no time to waste over such futilities. Renaudin has promised to speak of the matter to Robespierre.

Nivôse 29.—This day has seen the condemnation and execution of the nephew of a man who had much reason to complain of the old *régime*—Jean Vissec, Baron de Latude.

Pluviôse 2.—A year since to-day we executed the King. This morning my wife was so pale and tired when she awoke that I guessed that her sleep had been troubled. She knelt down to pray, and I did the same. . . . I had to lead four to the scaffold to-day—Jean Thibault, labourer; Marc Étienne Quatremère, merchant; Jean Marie de l'Écluse, lieutenant in the navy; and

Digitized by Google

Bernard Sablès, merchant. The town was merry, on account of the anniversary of the death of the King. The streets were full of citizens, who sang patrotic choruses. We reached the Place, and as L'Écluse was going up the steps loud shouts were heard. The members of the Convention were coming through the garden. The public, unasked, opened its ranks before the deputies; but the latter neither advanced nor returned on their steps. A committee of Jacobins had asked the Convention that a deputation of its members should join the Commune in a pilgrimage to the tree of liberty in commemoration of the day. The motion had excited great enthusiasm, and the Assembly rose in a body to join the *cortége*. No doubt they had no idea of the surprise Citizen Fouquier had reserved for them. Many deputies, when they saw the cart, tried to go away; but the people pressed around them, thereby obliging them to witness the execution. The tumult was so great that the convict L'Écluse stopped on the steps and turned round. The assistants stood motionless, and I myself did not care to outrage the majesty of the deputies of the nation by such a sight. Cries of 'Proceed with the execution!' were raised, and we did our duty. The head of the naval officer fell, and his three companions suffered after him. The thump of the knife was greeted with tremendous applause.

Pluviôse 3, 4, 5.—Thirteen executions of minor individuals.

Pluviôse 13.—Yesterday I returned from Bric, where

Digitized by Google

our country house is. The three days I passed there leave me no desire to return to the place. The word 'fraternity' is inscribed on the mairie, but it is not inscribed on the hearts of the inhabitants. While the poorest in Paris sacrifice whatever they possess, while the most relentless sometimes behave with real generosity, the inhabitants of the country only think of enriching themselves. The sale of the national domains, far from satisfying them, has only excited their cupidity. The law awards death to monopolisers. Were the law carried out, a guillotine should be erected in every village; for almost every peasant conceals his corn, for fear of being compelled to take it to market, and receive assignats in payment. There are, it is true, revolutionary committees in almost every village; but the peasants understand their own interests, and they never denounce each other. They form a secret association, which defies the decrees of the Convention, and which is the real cause of famine. The patriotic vigilance of the said committees is only exercised at the expense of those who are rich enough to be envied. Thus several rich inhabitants of Coulommiers, two of whom I know, were brought to Paris, judged and executed to-day, under pretext of a conspiracy which never existed.

Pluviôse 16.—The jurors of the Revolutionary Tribunal are not very scrupulous as to whom they condemn, and on their side the prisoners care little for life. Never were people more regardless of existence. Formerly, when I used to enter a prison, my appearance frightened the boldest: now among the prisoners I meet in the

Digitized by Google

passages and parlour of the prison, not one seems to think that to-morrow, perhaps, I may call for him. There are some who smile when I appear. These smiles produce a singular effect upon me. Experience has made me callous, and I can bear the horror with which we executioners are regarded; but to get accustomed to people who almost say 'Thank you' when they are led to the guillotine, is more difficult. My hand could not have remained firm if it had still to carry out such sentences as the former *régime* were wont to inflict. Judges, jurors, prisoners seem as if they were taken with a kind of delirium of death. When shall all this end? A prisoner asked me the other day: 'What could I do in order to be guillotined immediately?' Those who manifest such impatience perhaps are not the pluckiest. There are others who remain calm and cool, as if they had yet a hundred years to live. Such was Montjourdain, commander of the St. Lazare battalion. During six weeks of incarceration in the Conciergerie he did not betray the slightest sign of fear or sadness. When he was informed that his time was come, he composed a song. He was taken to the scaffold with one Courtonnet, and both kept on joking and laughing up to the last minute.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CHARLES HENRY SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

Pluviôse 17.—To-day we executed some ladies of quality. They showed almost as much tranquillity as Citizen Montjourdain. Their names were: Marie Gabrielle Lechapt, widow of the Marquis de Rastignac, convicted of having sent money to her son, who had emigrated; the *ci-devant* Marchioness de Marbœuf, convicted of having accaparated provisions; and with her Jean Joseph Payen, farmer of Madame de Marbœuf; and two forgers of assignats, Nicolas Armand and Jean Renaud. On the way Madame de Marbœuf exhorted Payen to die courageously. She said to him:

'After all, my poor fellow, it is just the same whether we die to-day or twenty years later.'

'If it is just the same,' answered Payen, who was not at all resigned to his fate, 'I would rather die in twenty years.'

Pluviôse 19.—This day, Elisabeth Pauline Gand, wife of Count de Lauraguais; Louis Pierre; Madame de Lauraguais's steward; Pierre Joseph Petit, constitutional curate of Ménil, guilty of corresponding with the enemy;

Digitized by Google

and Nicolas Pasquin, formerly Princess Elizabeth's valet, were executed.

Pluviôse 22.—Couthon had, it appears, made more noise than harm at Lyons. He threatened very loudly, but his threats killed no one. Things considerably altered after he was superseded by Collot and Fouché. Collot eschewed the guillotine, which he thought was not sufficiently expeditious, and executed with cannon, and thus put to death over two hundred persons every day. Robespierre and Couthon are indignant at this butchery. The Convention governs the Republic. It is itself governed by a dozen sanguinary leaders, who obey the orders of the Club des Cordeliers; so that Hébert, who is the big gun of the Cordeliers, can say with reason that he is the real sovereign of the people. All this is sad enough. The Tribunal to-day sentenced six nuns. We executed them immediately after their trial.

Pluviôse 23.—Executed Anne Henriette Bouchevain, Baronne de Vaxence, and François Amable Chapuy, lieutenant-colonel of the fifth battalion of Saone-et-Loire.

. . . . . .

Ventôse 1.—Ronsin, general of the revolutionary army, and Vincent have been set free. What is strange is that it is Danton who obtained the discharge of these two violent men. Ronsin strides about the streets with his old airs. His presence dispels all hopes of clemency; and it has given rise to the rumour that another government is to be established. This government is to have for principal object the acceleration of revolutionary

Digitized by Google

justice. Ronsin is to be the head of the government; under him is to be a military tribunal, composed of a high judge, a prosecutor, and four judges. A council, called the Conseil Antique, is to take the place of the Convention. I need hardly say that very few people believe in this absurdity. To-day executed François Gerbaut, merchant, and a deserter named Gossenot.

. . . . . .

Ventôse 6.—Jean Jacques Dortoman, formerly general in the Army of Italy; Thomas de Maussion, a nobleman; Joseph Canel, a hairdresser; and Barbe Smith, a woman, were executed to-day.

Ventôse 8.—Wood, which was dear enough last month, is unapproachable now. The cold is intense. A month ago planks of the guillotine were stolen; this morning, on our way to the Conciergerie, we found a man stretched out on the pavement; he wanted to fetch some water from the river, had fallen on the quay, and had not the strength to get up. He told us that he had not eaten for two days. We had three cart-loads of convicts to-day, fifteen in all—men, women, noblemen, priests, and merchants.

Ventôse 10.—Robespierre is ill, and the Cordeliers have it all their own way. Yesterday they declared that Citizens Camille Desmoulins and Fabre d'Eglantine should be impeached: they also make the best of the sufferings of the people, which are great; they accuse the Convention and speak of doing again what was done on June 2. What shall we become if they have the best of it? Since the guillotine is at the order of the

Digitized by Google

day, its inventors are always thinking of modifying it. Over twenty suggestions to that effect have been presented to the revolutionary committee, but they were so absurd that only one of these has been reserved for consideration. The plan consists in a trap opening near the weigh-plank, into which the body falls, a device which prevents accumulation on the guillotine. Citizen Vouland, of the Convention, was present when the experiment was made. It did not succeed, the two bags of sand which were used for the purpose having failed to enter the trap. Citizen Vouland asked for my opinion. I said that the proposed alteration was full of danger; that if the trap did not close better than it opened, the executioners or the convicts might fall through it with the corpses. He expressed his concurrence in this view, and the proposed alteration was shelved.

We guillotined five persons to-day—four men and one woman.

Ventôse 13.—The Revolutionary Tribunal settles old accounts with country citizens. Two carts were sent to the guillotine to-day. All the convicts were peasants. A very unfortunate accident happened. Only one convict remained, all his companions having been executed before him; as he was being strapped down, my son Henri, who was attending to the baskets, called me and I went to him. Larivière, one of the assistants, had forgotten to re-raise the knife, so that when the weigh-plank was lowered with the convict Laroque strapped upon it, his face struck the edge of the knife, which was

Digitized by Google

bloody. He uttered a terrible shriek. I ran up, lifted the weigh-plank, and hastened to raise the knife. The convict trembled like a leaf. The mob hissed us, and threw stones at us. In the evening Citizen Fouquier severely reprimanded me. I deserved his blame, for I should have been in my usual place. Citizen Fouquier saw I was very sorry, and dismissed me with more kindness than I expected. Thirteen executions.

Ventôse 15.—The Cordeliers proclaimed insurrection in their sitting of yesterday. I see no symptoms of emotion in the streets; gatherings are neither more numerous nor more turbulent than usual. If this goes on, the Père Duchêne (Hébert) may perhaps learn by experience what the sensations of the guillotine are. On the other hand, the people of the guillotine,[1] who are just as much the people of the Club des Cordeliers, were inflamed by the speeches they had heard. Never have convicts been more hooted than those of this morning were. Cries of 'Pitch them into the river!' were heard for the first time. The utmost consternation prevails throughout the prisons, with the exception of the Conciergerie, for those who are prisoners have very little hope, whatever may occur. The convicts of this morning were a father and his two sons; Guillaume Saint-Souplet, Anne Michel, and Anne Claude Saint-Souplet, aristocrats. Three other convicts also suffered.

. . . . . .

Ventôse 17.—Guillotined, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Claude Compart, general inspector of the

[1] The narrator means the usual attendants of executions.

Digitized by Google

post-office; Jacques Marie Duchemin, secretary of the Prince de Condé; and Gilbert de Grassin, gentleman.

Ventôse 18.—A foreigner, who, as well as I could guess by his accent, was an Englishman, called on me to-day, and forthwith proposed to give me a neat sum if I would include him for one day among my assistants. I had all sorts of reasons to be surprised at the proposal; I enquired whether what he wished to do was out of hatred against the French. He answered that he did not care much either for France or for the French, but that his motive was the satisfaction of curiosity; that he had come to Paris to see a revolution of which the whole world was speaking, and that, before going, he wished to see an execution as closely as possible. I then tried to impress on him that his curiosity might bring him into trouble, that we were at war with his country, and that if he were identified he would certainly be taken for a spy and treated as such; in short I flatly refused his proffer. He listened to me with much coolness, and when I had done speaking, he answered that his mind was made up, and that, 'in spite of me,' he would go on the scaffold.

I could not help saying to him:

'Take care you don't go there in spite of yourself.'

He left me, saying, '*Au revoir.*'

To-day we had two executions: Louis Desacres de Laigle, Count and Marshal; and Anne Alexandrine Rosalie de Larochefoucauld.

Ventôse 20.—Ronsin's and Hébert's party has attempted to raise the Commune. They asked that the

Digitized by Google

Declaration of the Rights of Man should remain valid until the Republic had exterminated her enemies. They were listened to; but no one stirred, not even Chaumette. It is said that Ronsin made a scene after the sitting, and tried to strike the prosecutor of the Commune. The fate of the Hébertists is as good as sealed now. It was even rumoured this morning that most of them had been arrested.

Ventôse 24.—Ronsin, Vincent, Hébert, Momoro, Laumur, Ducroquet, and Ancard were arrested last night. The details of their conspiracy were frightful. It is said that they proposed renewing the massacres in September.

Ventôse 26.—We had a terrible day's work to-day. In yesterday's sitting, the Tribunal passed sixteen sentences of death. I was ready at two o'clock yesterday; but Citizen Fabricius told me that, as it was raining fast, it was more advisable to delay execution until the next morning. This morning, then, I went to the Conciergerie with four carts. All the convicts were natives of the department of La Nièvre, who had taken part in an insurrection. The execution lasted thirty-two minutes.

. . . . . .

Germinal 1.—The trial of Hébert, Vincent, and the other Cordeliers commenced this morning. It is said that it cannot but last several days. This is a respite for me, at least. Two men suffered to-day. On returning from the Place de la Révolution, Citizen Fouquier ordered me to remain in permanency so long as the trial of the Hébertists should last; so I entered the justice hall,

Digitized by Google

and heard what was going on. Twenty accused were seated in a row. Hébert was very pale, and could hardly answer when he was spoken to; Ronsin and Momoro seemed to defy the judges. The wife of Quétineau, who was executed the other day, is among the prisoners—no one knows why. Rivière told me that, during the first days of their incarceration, they quarrelled together. It was Anacharsis Clootz who made them understand that these disputes were of no good. When Hébert was brought into the prison, those who had been arrested before him jeered him; but Ronsin defended him, and a collision ensued between the latter and a man named Collignon. Hébert and his partisans now turn their backs upon their other companions. Kock, the banker, in whose house they used to feast, will share their fate, He said he would give a last dinner to his friends before their death.

Germinal 3.—Henri took my place to-day on the scaffold. I remained in permanency in the Tribunal. Hébert and Vincent are much discouraged. Ronsin does not flinch; and Clootz is sad, but very calm and dignified. He has written a pamphlet entitled, 'The Universal Republic,' in which he said that he was the personal enemy of God. He also said that the world would join France, and adopt republican institutions. This pamphlet has been used against him; and Renaudin said to him that it was only written to render the coalition of crowned heads against France plausible. Clootz answered:

'I cannot be suspected of being a partisan of kings; it would indeed be extraordinary if a man who would

Digitized by Google

be burnt at Rome, hanged in England, and quartered at Vienna, were guillotined in Paris.'

Clootz is a sincere madman who deserves a shower bath, and nothing more. And then the ways of the Tribunal are so singular that they excite interest on behalf of all those who appear before it, whoever they may be. Thus I heard the President upbraiding Clootz for being a born Prussian, and for being rich; this is so unjust that it verges on stupidity. The trial will go on to-morrow.

Germinal 4.—The execution took place to-day. The trial was resumed at ten o'clock this morning. President Dumas made a terrible speech, and the jurors retired to deliberate. At about half-past twelve they delivered their verdict. Nineteen of the prisoners were sentenced to death; one only, Citizen Labourreau, medical student, was acquitted. Citizeness Jeanne Latreille, wife of the late General Quétineau, declared she was pregnant, and obtained a provisional reprieve. The judgment must have been written beforehand, for hardly half-an-hour after it was delivered criers were reading it around the Palace of Justice. Their execution was to be immediate. Fouquier said: 'Each second of their existence becomes an outrage to the majesty of the people.' I sent off some men to the Place de la Révolution. Henri hurried to the Rue François-Miron, where the carts were ready. He returned with the same rapidity, and an hour and a half after the declaration of the verdict the prisoners were brought forward. They were eighteen in number—Jacques René Hébert, a man of letters, and

Digitized by Google

before the Revolution *employé* of the Théâtre de Variétés; Charles Philippe Ronsin, formerly a journalist, more recently general of the revolutionary armies; Antoine François Momoro, printer; Nicolas Vincent, formerly lawyer's clerk; Michel Laumur, general; Jean-Baptiste Anacharsis Clootz, journalist and member of the Convention; Pierre Jean Proly, editor of 'Le Cosmopolite;' Conrad Kock, banker; Jacob Pereira, vice-president of the 'Section du Bon-Conseil;' Armand Hubert Leclerc, *employé* in the war-office; François Desfieux, wine merchant; Jean Antoine Florent Armand, medical student; Jean-Baptiste Ancard, manager of the arsenals; Frederic Pierre Ducroquet, commisioner of the government; Antoine Descombes, commissioner of the government; Jean Charles Bourgeois, member of the committee of surveillance of war; Pierre Ulric Dubuisson, commissioner of the executive power; and Albert Mazuel, commander in the army. I was talking with Richard, the turnkey, when I was apprised of the arrival of the carts. I went to see that everything was right, and while I was examining the carts I saw, under a red cap drawn far down over the face of the wearer, a fair beard which I had never seen among my assistants. The man tried to walk away, but I soon identified the Englishman who had called on me the other day. He had given money to the assistants, and had obtained of them what I had refused, thinking that I would not point him out on the way to the scaffold. But I was not less obstinate than he was. We had five carts. I pretended to take him for what he gave himself to be, and I ordered him to

Digitized by Google

take one of the carts back to my house. He hesitated, and was about to speak; but I looked in the direction of the gendarmes and he reluctantly obeyed; not, however, without making me a grimace which signified, '*Au revoir.*' Ronsin came forward first; his mien was calm and proud. Clootz also was quite cool, and in no way disturbed; he continued his apostleship, and preached to his companions, asking them not to belie their principles, assuring them that the guillotine was the ultimate end of their tribulation, that the guillotine was the end of everything; and begging them to give to the world the sight of a republican death. His voice was hardly audible, for the convicts continued to accuse each other. As Descombes's lips were silently moving, Clootz supposed that he was praying, and upbraided him for his cowardice. Vincent was not so bold as during the trial. Hébert came in, supported by two turnkeys; he had scarcely strength enough to raise his legs. He was elegantly dressed, as was his wont, with a watch in each fob, but his attire was disordered; his face was as livid as if the knife of the guillotine had already passed through his neck; he wept, and drops trickled down his forehead. So much cowardice was unpleasant to behold. Ronsin was highly indignant; he did not look at his former friend, and said to Momoro: 'We staked our heads, we lost the game, we must pay with courage and firmness.' The toilet began, and as I had six assistants, it only lasted a few minutes, and the signal for departure was given. There were so many people outside that we could hear the noise and murmur of the crowd. We

Digitized by Google

emerged through the court of the prison. When the public saw the eighteen convicts there was a tremendous shout. This time every window was open and thousands of heads peered out. What is rather curious is, that the rascals who usually escort us and who used to be Hébert's friends were the most violent against him to-day. The 'Père Duchêne' was particularly insulted; but Hébert heeded not; he was half dead with terror. When we passed before Duplay's house, the crowd cheered lustily, as if to thank Robespierre for ridding France of unprincipled rascals like Hébert. Fouquier, out of compassion for Clootz, had ordered that he should be executed first. Clootz, however, refused; he wished, he said, to fortify himself in his disbelief in second life, and urge to the last upon his companions to do the same; and he added that the privilege given him was one which one always had the right to decline. There was a dispute on the matter, but the clerk told me to let him have his own way. Descombes was guillotined first; then came Mazuel, Bourgeois, Armand, Leclerc, Dubuisson, Ducroquet, Kock, Ancard, Pereira, Desfieux, Laumur, Proly, Vincent, Momoro, and Ronsin, who was extremely courageous. When only Clootz and Hébert remained, I told my assistants to take Hébert. He exclaimed in a weak voice: 'Not yet!' Clootz heard him, and rushed forward crying: 'Hurrah for the fraternity of nations! long live the Republic of the world!' After him, Hébert was at length strapped down. I believe he fainted away while this was being done. I made a sign to Lariviére, who was holding the rope; but either he

Digitized by Google

did not see me or he wished to indulge the sanguinary rage of the mob against the 'Père Duchêne,' for he did not obey. I rushed forward, took the rope out of his hand, and pulled it myself. Enthusiastic cries of '*Vive la République!*' were uttered when Hébert's head disappeared in the basket.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

Germinal 5.—Everybody looked pleased yesterday. A rumour had spread that Citizens Robespierre and Danton had made peace; that one had demanded the execution of Hébert and his friends as a token of reconciliation, while the other asked for the heads of the great royalist conspirators, of the deputies accused of malversation, and of Chaumette and Simon, arrested on Ventôse 28, but that after these executions the Tribunal should be ordered to measure real justice. This was one of the reasons for which such an enormous multitude was out yesterday. This morning there was as much alarm as there was confidence yesterday. It was said that, far from thinking of making it up with Danton, Robespierre had only struck his enemies in order to strike Danton himself. Our democracy is very much like a despotism, for those who exercise power cannot resign themselves to share it with others. One of the jurors, Naudin, was saying to Sellier: 'To walk behind Robespierre, Danton is too tall by a head.' It is also said that Danton, on being warned of the danger which threatens him, answered: 'They would not dare; I am

Digitized by Google

the holy ark; and if I supposed that Robespierre thinks of arresting me, I would eat his heart.' I think he is mistaken. The only holy ark, nowadays, is the guillotine. It is as difficult for a tribune as for a king to know the real sentiments of the people. The people admires the great demolishers, but their admiration has something of terror. Danton speaks and acts like a man, Robespierre like a prophet: the empire shall always belong to prophets. The man with the blue coat[1] has already his devotees; the wife of Desmorets, my assistant, recites prayers before a portrait of Robespierre; a good many women do as she does. However zealous in the discharge of its functions the Tribunal may be, the prisons are nevertheless full to overflowing. To-day we executed three natives of the department of Allier, sentenced for speaking against the Revolution. Two were brothers; the third was the son of one of them.

Germinal 6.—To-day we led to the scaffold Jean Louis Gouth, formerly constitutional bishop of Autun and member of the Constituent Assembly; the two brothers Balleroy Charles Auguste and François Auguste; the former was a marquis and a lieutenant-general, the second a marshal; Denis Joisel, servant of Monsieur, the King's brother, and Etienne Théry. The latter had usurped the title of representative of the people, with the mere object of obtaining gratis a good dinner in an inn. His assumption has cost him his life.

Germinal 7.—It is said everywhere that the Com-

[1] Robespierre.

Digitized by Google

mittees are discussing the arrest of Danton. In my humble judgment, big dogs are preparing to bite, for curs bark too boldly. Valate, a terrorist, is reported to have said yesterday: 'Before a week Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Philippeaux will be arrested.' If they are taken, it will be their own fault, for the rumour is public. But one cannot run away when one's name is Danton. Executed a man and a woman: Claude Marie Lambertye and Henri Moreau, convicted of conspiracy.

Germinal 8.—Jean-Baptiste Peusselet, formerly a monk; Jacques Pernet, captain of dragoons and general in the service of Bavaria, suffered to-day.

Germinal 9.—The Hébertists were sold by a man named Laboureau. He called his former friends rascals, and was discharged by the Revolutionary Tribunal for his pains. The day before yesterday Laboureau went to the meeting of the Jacobins; Legendre, who presided, complimented him and congratulated the Tribunal on its equity. Poor Citizen Legendre, you may get to know to your cost what this equity is! Executed Jean-Baptiste Collignon, printer; Jean-Baptiste Courtin, abbot of the Order of Cluny; Nicolas Jean Adam, monk; Antoine Meffre, monk; Louis François Poire, one of Talleyrand's servants; and Jacques Harille, merchant.

Germinal 11.—Citizens Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Lacroix, and Philippeaux were arrested to-day and taken to the Luxembourg. Seven executions yesterday and to-day.

Germinal 12.—Citizen Legendre, member of the

Digitized by Google

Convention, has not been arrested with Danton, as was rumoured yesterday. Richard, of the Conciergerie, has received orders to prepare No. 4, the cell formerly tenanted by Hébert, and the other cells occupied by his companions. These preparations show that Danton and his friends will be transferred to the Conciergerie this evening or to-morrow at the latest, and that their trial will take place immediately. Such prisoners are not easy to keep. To-day we guillotined Euloge Schneider, formerly a priest, who was prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Strasburg. He used openly to turn the Terror to his profit—that is to say, to the profit of his vices; he went about Alsace with his tribunal, his guillotine, and my colleague of Strasburg, obliging the inhabitants to illuminate their houses when he passed, levying contributions, passing capital sentences, and inciting to plunder, theft, &c., wherever he stopped. One of his friends named Tunck wishing to marry, he required the attendance of all the girls of Barr, and allowed him to choose in the lot; and to complete his kindness, he ordered the executioner to collect money around the scaffold for the bride and bridegroom.

Soon after, he felt a desire to establish himself also, and at one o'clock in the morning he sent a peremptory order to a citizen of Barr to bring him his daughter, who was young and handsome. The unfortunate man dared not refuse. On the following day he returned to Strasburg with the poor child, in a carriage drawn by six horses. But Citizen Saint-Just had arrived during his absence, and Schneider was arrested on the

Digitized by Google

same day, exhibited during three hours on his own guillotine, and sent off to Paris in the evening, there to be tried. This terrible Schneider has been very humble and small in my hands. He was a broad-shouldered, thick-necked man, well knit, and as strong as a bull; his face was sinister and altogether repulsive. He tried to joke, and spoke jocosely of the thickness of his neck; but he could not go on; tears came to his eyes, and a tremor shot over his frame. On the Place de la Révolution, he called me 'Sir, sir, sir!' not knowing what he was saying. Before him, Louis Simon Collivet, grocer; Charles Brochet de Saint Priest, nobleman; and Charles Victor François de Sulabery, nobleman, were executed.

Germinal 13.—Citizen Danton and his friends have been transferred to the Conciergerie. Their trial is to take place to-morrow. The trial of the deputies charged with malversation is to take place at the same time. Fifteen men in all.

Germinal 14.—Executed Jean Masquet, cattle-dealer, and Étienne Jacques Armand de Rougemont, nobleman.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TRIAL OF DANTON, CAMILLE DESMOULINS, WESTERMANN, &c. &c.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S notes contain no information on the trial of the Dantonists. This trial, however, my grandfather must have followed with the greatest interest. In some parts of his diary it is easy to detect his conviction that the result of the struggle between Danton and Robespierre would be to increase or diminish the number of capital sentences delivered by the Revolutionary Tribunal. No wonder that he should have been interested in this phase of the history of the Revolution. My father told me that Charles Henri was present at almost every sitting of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and related to his family all that he had seen and heard. It is perhaps owing to the emotion which he felt then that the present gap in his diary is to be ascribed.

The Danton affair is, however, of such importance that it may not be amiss to say a few words on it before we recur to Charles Henri Sanson's diary.

Whatever opinion may be held of Danton, one cannot but recognise that his overthrow was the great event of the revolutionary period. Until then the Revolution

Digitized by Google

had only struck those who might be regarded as her enemies. The impeachment of the celebrated tribune was the first blow aimed at the upholders of the Republic; little by little the revolutionists tore, mangled, and destroyed each other; and finally the intervention of a Barrère or a Tallien was enough to consummate the ruin of the republican edifice.

As was said before, Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Philippeaux, and Lacroix were arrested in the night of the 11th of Germinal. It has been said that Robespierre was adverse to this measure, but this is far from true. His personal interests were concerned in the arrest of these four men, and he afterwards betrayed his hatred for Danton and his friends by making a speech against them in the Convention. Danton, at the time, was the noble exponent of generosity and clemency. If he had all the vices of a powerful and exuberant nature, he also had high qualities; he was disgusted at judicial massacres, and, after looking on in silence, he had spoken out and expressed his real sentiments. Public opinion had therefore identified his views with the sublime pages in which Camille Desmoulins gave vent to his patriotic grief and indignation. The natural consequence was that the fanatics who thought that blood alone could cement the revolutionary edifice, considered the death of these two men indispensable to the realisation of their dreams. As to Robespierre, his views were, it appears to me, more profound. Cruelty was not in his nature; it was one of the necessities of his policy. He was too sagacious not to be aware that real popularity

Digitized by Google

would belong to those who should speak of clemency; and Robespierre no doubt wished to reserve this popularity for himself. Danton spoke of clemency before him; that was his only crime.

Danton made no show of resistance when he was arrested. As to Camille Desmoulins, he opened his window and called for help against tyranny when the soldiers entered his room. No one answering his appeal, he resigned himself to his fate, took some books, embraced his young wife and his child, and allowed himself to be led off. Philippeaux and Lacroix were arrested without any difficulty. On the day after their incarceration the four prisoners were permitted to walk in the courtyard, where the inmates of the prison met. Camille was dark and sad, Lacroix was disheartened, Philippeaux was calm and resigned, Danton was just what he usually was, cheerful and full of power of repartee. The news of the presence of these powerful men had spread like wildfire in the prison, and all flocked to see them. A few prisoners even forgot that Danton and his friends were amongst them for taking up their cause, and insulted them. A *ci-devant* said, pointing to Lacroix, who was tall and strong: 'He would make a fine coachman.' Danton smiled contemptuously. Somebody having enquired how he, Danton, could have been deceived by Robespierre, he answered that, after all, he would rather be guillotined than guillotine. Tom Payne was a prisoner in the Luxembourg at the time; Danton shook hands with him, saying, in English: 'I am glad to meet you, friend; what you have done for the happiness and liberty of

Digitized by Google

your country, I have in vain striven to do for mine. I have been less fortunate, but no guiltier than you. They now send me to the scaffold: such is my reward.'

When the four prisoners received the act of impeachment drawn up against them, Camille Desmoulins foamed with rage, Philippeaux raised his hands to heaven, Danton laughed and rated Camille for his want of callousness. He went up to Lacroix and asked him: 'Well, what do you think of this pretty document?' 'I think we had better make ready to meet Sanson,' answered Lacroix.

Danton was in hopes of moving the public on the day of trial; and his expectations were certainly not over sanguine. The report of his arrest and that of Camille, who was very popular, had produced a sensation. On the 11th and 12th many persons were assembled near the walls of the Luxembourg, and my father told me that they looked at the prison with astonishment, as if they expected to see it crumble down, like a new Jericho, at Danton's bidding. Camille's soul was more tender and poetical than Danton's. He thought of his young and charming wife, and of his baby son. His wife passed her days in the garden of the Luxembourg, and he tried to catch a glimpse of her through the bars of the prison window. He recovered his powers as a writer, and began his last number of the 'Vieux Cordelier,' his final denunciation of tyrants. He also wrote to his wife a really magnificent letter, which has been reproduced by the historians of the Revolution. Danton and his friends were transferred to the Conciergerie on the 13th, and were immediately brought

Digitized by Google

before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The jurors had been carefully chosen, and it was notorious that not one of them was favourable to the prisoners. Four other members of the Convention, charged with malversation, were included in the charge. These were Chabot, Delaunay, Bazire, and Fabre d'Eglantine. The accusation made out against them was never proved. Other prisoners were tried at the same time. There were thirteen in all; but Fouquier discovered that some had been forgotten, and the number was raised to fifteen.

The decision of the jury was a foregone conclusion, and the debates of the trial have been so often described that there is but little need to relate them at length. All the accused displayed stern bravery, knowing well the fate that was reserved for them. But none equalled Danton in eloquence and vehement denunciations of his enemies. His attitude was superb, and before him the judges and jurors shrank back and trembled. His tremendous voice could be heard outside the court, and it became so evident that the people would rise to deliver him if he were allowed to continue, that the President of the court ruled that the prisoners should be removed from the hall of justice while their fate was being decided. The whole trial, in fact, was a shameful parody of justice; and when a verdict of guilty was brought in against all the accused with the exception of one, no one for a moment doubted that Danton and his friends were the victims of a cruel and relentless policy.

I now leave my grandfather to speak for himself.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CHARLES HENRY SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

Germinal 16.—By the order of Citizen Fouquier, I remained in the vicinity of the Tribunal all day yesterday. The hall of justice was so crowded that I could not gain admittance. I arrived at nine o'clock this morning at the Conciergerie. As I passed the threshold, a gendarme tapped me on the shoulder, and said to me: 'You'll have plenty to do to-day;' and Rivière added: 'They are all sentenced to death.' He was mistaken, as I found out afterwards, for Citizen Luillier was acquitted. He was so inoffensive and obscure that no one thought of him. Richard's lodge was crowded with people who wanted to see the prisoners. As I was crossing the courtyard, Wolf, one of the clerks, told me to follow him upstairs. Citizen Ducray and two other clerks were writing; and Fabricius Pâris, the head clerk, was walking up and down the room. His eyes were very red; he was deadly pale, and he trembled like a leaf. When he saw me, he said: 'I am going away.' Ducray turned round and said: 'Will you sign?' 'No, no, once more,' replied Citizen Fabricius; 'I would rather burn my hand than sign.' He went

Digitized by Google

away with tears in his eyes. I was not surprised, for I knew him to be a great friend of Danton's, and his pluck pleased me. Fouquier-Tinville, who is a cousin of Desmoulins, had not the same scruples. Lescot-Fleuriot, deputy-prosecutor, and two other functionaries entered the room. Lescot asked me whether my carts were ready. I replied that they were. He then ordered me to go down and wait, which I did.

I had been waiting for a considerable time, when a gendarme came to tell me that I was wanted by Fouquier-Tinville. I found a good many persons in his closet—old Vadier, Amar, Coffinhal, Arthus, Herman, among others. Although Fouquier was present, I received the order of execution from the hands of Lescot. He told me that the convicts had rebelled against the Tribunal; that they would probably offer new resistance; that to prevent any mishap they would be introduced one by one; that I should have to seize them immediately, and pinion them. Fleuriot added that if the convicts attempted to excite the people on their way to the scaffold, I was to go at a trot, and make all haste. He also recommended extreme celerity in the execution itself, observing that the sooner the 'ruffians' died the better. After this, a discussion arose as to the number of carts required. I had ordered three out. Lescot said that one was sufficient, and Coffinhal observed that only one should be used. I objected to this, and obtained two carriages.

I then proceeded to the parlour, which was full of

Digitized by Google

gendarmes and soldiers. They formed two thick ranks. Half-an-hour elapsed before one of the convicts appeared. This was Chabot. He looked very ill. He was surprised at finding himself alone, and murmured: 'Where are the others?' He was pinioned, and his hair was cut. Bazire was the next to appear. Chabot rose, and, running up to him, exclaimed, with tears in his eyes: 'My poor, poor Bazire, it was I who brought you to this!' Bazire pressed him in his arms, without a word of reproach.

The two Freys, Delaunay, member of the Convention, the Abbé d'Espagnac, and Disderiksen were led in after Bazire. After these, Philippeaux, Lacroix, Westermann, and Fabre d'Eglantine. Two turnkeys supported the latter, who was ill. During the toilet, Fabre said he wished to speak to Fouquier. One of my assistants called a clerk, who said this was not possible. Citizen Fabre then became angry, and cried: 'You ought to be satisfied with murdering me, and not steal my property! I publicly protest against the infamy of the members of the Tribunal, who have stolen from me a MS. comedy, which had nothing to do with the trial.' Lacroix and Philippeaux were calm.

Fabre was still speaking when a noise was heard in the passage. We recognised the voice of Citizen Danton, and there was a dead silence. His words came out like a torrent. I distinctly heard him say to the clerk who wanted to read out his judgment: 'Be d—d, and your judgment with you! I won't listen to it! What a

Digitized by Google

farce!' He thundered away, and all seemed to recoil before him. But when he saw the other convicts, his demeanour altered completely. He assumed a cold, indifferent air, and calmly walked up to me. He sat down, and tore away his collar, saying: 'Do your duty, Citizen Sanson.' I cut his hair myself. It was thick and hard like a mane. Meanwhile he went on speaking to his friends: 'This is the beginning of the end; they'll guillotine the representatives wholesale. Committees governed by a Couthon without legs, and a Robespierre. . . . If I could leave them mine, they might go on for some time. . . . But no; France will awake in a cesspool before long.' Shortly after, he exclaimed: 'We have accomplished our task. Let us go and sleep.'

Citizens Hérault de Séchelles and Camille Desmoulins were led in next. The former gave no sign of emotion; the latter spoke of his wife and child in heartrending terms. As soon as he saw us, he was seized with a tremendous fit of rage. He rushed upon my assistants, and struggled with them like a giant. All his clothes were torn in the scuffle. Four men had to hold him down on the chair. His friends tried to soothe him—Fabre with soft words, Danton with a tone of authority. The latter said: 'Leave these men alone! What's the use of fighting with the servants of the guillotine? They are only doing their duty. Do yours.'

At length everything was ready. Ducray headed the *cortége*. The members of the Convention and General Westermann occupied the first cart, in which I

Digitized by Google

and Henri sat down also; four assistants were in the second cart with the other convicts. The escort was as numerous as that provided for the Queen and the Girondins. Danton stood in the first rank, behind me; next to him was Hérault de Séchelles; Fabre, Camille, and Philippeaux were behind. Chabot was the only one who sat down. He had tried to poison himself, and suffered much. Bazire stood next to him, and spoke to him words of tender friendship.

As the carter whipped his horse Danton exclaimed: 'The idiots! they'll cry "Long live the Republic!" In half-an-hour the Republic will be without a head!' Fabre d'Eglantine was inconsolable about his comedy, which he said was in verse; upon which Danton laughed, and said to him: 'Verses![1] you'll have enough of them in a week, and we too.'

As we reached the quay, Camille Desmoulins became very furious. 'Do you not recognise me?' cried he. The Bastille fell at my bidding! Come to my help, republicans! Do not let them murder us!'

His cries were received with groans. His fury increased, and we had to threaten to tie him to the side of the cart if he did not remain still. Danton, who clearly saw that the people who surrounded them would not rise to free them, said to Camille in a strong voice: 'Be quiet, be quiet! do not hope to soften this vile rabble.' And Lacroix: 'Be calm; think rather of commanding respect than of exciting pity.'

[1] *Vers* in French, and as far as euphony is concerned, means *worm* as well as verse.

Digitized by Google

Danton was right: there was no hope for them. The escort was surrounded by the usual attendants of the guillotine, and they shouted so that it was impossible for the public at large to hear what the prisoners said.

Passing before a café we saw a citizen, seated on a window-sill, who was drawing likenesses of the prisoners. The latter looked at him, and murmured: 'David, David!' Danton raised his voice, and cried: 'Is that you, valet? Go and tell your master how soldiers of liberty can die.' Lacroix also spoke to him violently. David went on drawing. Doors, windows, and shutters were closed in Duplay's house (where Robespierre lives). When the prisoners saw the house, they aimed sarcasm over sarcasm at its walls. 'Vile hypocrite!' said Fabre. 'The coward is hiding himself, as he hid on August 10,' cried Lacroix. Danton's voice rose louder than any. His face was purple, and his eyes glistened like burning coals. 'You shall appear in this cart in your turn, Robespierre,' he exclaimed, 'and the soul of Danton will howl with joy!'

Danton was the same to the last: passing without transition from the most violent anger to the greatest calmness; at times brutal, at others sarcastic, and always firm. As we came in sight of the scaffold his colour slightly altered. The attention with which I looked at him seemed to displease him, for he elbowed me roughly, saying: 'Have you not a wife and children?' I replied that I had. He then resumed with impetuosity: 'So have I. I was thinking of them.' And I heard him

Digitized by Google

murmur: 'My wife, I shall not then see you again! My child, I shall not see you!'[1] But a few seconds after he was himself again.

Delaunay, Chabot, Bazire, the two Freys, Gusman, Disderiksen, and D'Espagnac died first. When Camille Desmoulins was on the platform he asked me to do him a last favour, which was to take a lock of his hair and send it to his mother-in-law. He then stepped towards the weigh-plank without resistance. Fabre, Lacroix, Westermann, Philippeaux suffered next. Westermann cried several times, '*Vive la République!*' Hérault de Séchelles came next, and Danton with him, although he was not called. My assistant had already seized Séchelles, when Danton advanced to embrace him. But it was too late. Danton looked on while his friend was being executed, with such coolness as does not belong to man. Not a muscle in his face moved. He seemed to defy not only the fear of death, but death itself. The weigh-plank was hardly lowered when he advanced. I advised him to turn round while the body was being removed. He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. 'Do not forget to show my head to the mob; they have not often seen one like it!'

When, according to his last wish, Danton's head was shown, there were cries of '*Vive la République!*' but not many.

The cemetery of La Madeleine, where are the King, the Queen, and the Girondins, having been closed, the

[1] Madame Danton was enceinte when her husband was put to death.

Digitized by Google

fifteen corpses of the Dantonists were taken to the small cemetery which has just been opened near the Barrière Monceaux.

I went to the Palace of Justice to take orders for to-morrow. Met Desboisseaux and Vilate, two jurors. They wanted to know how Danton had died. I related what I had seen. 'It is not astonishing; he was drunk,' exclaimed one of them. I assured them that Danton was not drunk at all; upon which they called me a traitor and a blackguard, and went away in a passion.

Germinal 17.—I did to-day what Citizen Desmoulins asked me. I got the address of his father and mother-in-law, at his house in the Rue de la Comédie, and went to No. 17 Rue des Arcs. Of course I did not go up. I sent for the servant, without telling her who I was, and said that, being present at the execution of Citizen Desmoulins, he had asked me to hand a locket to the mother of his wife. I then departed; but I soon heard steps behind. The servant came up, saying that Citizen Duplessis, Camille Desmoulins' father-in-law, wished to speak to me. I answered that I was in a hurry, and that I would return another day. But at that moment Citizen Duplessis himself came up. I told him what I had said to the girl. He answered that I must have something more to say to him; and he insisted so much that I could not but follow him. He lived on the second floor. We entered a richly-furnished room. He showed me a chair, and sat down. Hearing the cry of a child, I turned round and saw a cradle in the corner of the apartment. Citizen Duplessis ran up

Digitized by Google

to the cradle, and took out a child, who looked unwell. He showed him to me, and said: 'It is his son.' He kissed the baby, and said, with an effort: 'You were there—you saw him?' I nodded my assent. 'He died like a brave man—like a republican, eh?' I answered that Camille's last words had been for those he loved. After a pause, he suddenly turned pale, and wringing his hands: 'And my poor daughter, my Lucille!' he exclaimed; 'will they kill her, as they killed him?' And he expressed his grief in heartrending terms.[1] A cold shudder crept over me. M. Duplessis walked to and fro, clenching his fists. As he was passing before a bust of Liberty on the mantelpiece, he threw it down, and furiously broke it to pieces. I was grieved and awed, and found no words of consolation for the poor old man. There was a ring at that moment, and an elderly lady, whose handsome face was pale with despair, entered and threw herself into the arms of Citizen Duplessis, crying: 'Lost! she is lost! She is to appear in three days before the Tribunal.' It was Madame Desmoulins' mother. I was seized with terror at the thought that I might be recognised by a woman in the loss of whose happiness I had a finger; and I ran away, as if I had committed a crime.

Germinal 18.—A generous citizen presented himself yesterday before the Convention, and offered to defray all the expenses of the guillotine. Executed seven men and four women to-day.

Germinal 20.—Desmoulins' wife is at the Conciergerie with her so-called accomplices. They are to

[1] Madame Desmoulins had been arrested.

Digitized by Google

appear to-morrow before the Tribunal, with Citizen Chaumette and several others.

Germinal 23.—To-day we put to death Claude Souchon, formerly general in the army of the Pyrenees. He was a very brave man, and he died crying: '*Vive la République!*'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XL.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

Germinal 24.—The trial of the wife of Citizen Desmoulins was concluded to-day. Her despair was intense when she arrived at the Conciergerie. It was at first thought that she was insane, and some hoped that she might be saved on account of her diseased mind. But she recovered her wits during the trial, and her fate was soon sealed. With her were tried a batch of *révolutionnaires*, among whom were Chaumette and Arthur Dillon, ex-count, and general of the Army of Ardennes, and Hébert's wife.

When the last hour came, Madame Desmoulins appeared dressed in her best attire Madame Hébert cried much, and Madame Desmoulins tried to console her. As she was stepping into the cart, Dillon approached her. She told him that she bitterly regretted being the cause of his death. Dillon answered that it was not her fault, and he expressed his grief at the sad fate of so young and so charming a creature. Madame Desmoulins interrupted him: 'Look at me,' she exclaimed, 'and say whether my face is that of a woman who needs consolation. My only wish, since Camille's death, has been to

Digitized by Google

join him; this wish is now about to be accomplished. If I did not detest those who have condemned me, because they murdered the best and most honest of men, I would bless them for the boon they now confer on me.' She then bade farewell to Dillon. Dillon was in the first cart, Madame Desmoulins in the second, with the Grammont-Nourrys, Lacroix, Lapalu, Lassalle, and Madame Hébert. On the way she talked with the last two citizens, who were very young—Lapalu was twenty-six years of age, and Lassalle twenty-four. She spoke so gaily that she made them smile more than once. Their conversation was troubled by the tears of Madame Hébert, and by the two Grammonts, who kept on quarrelling with each other. The son charged the father with having caused his death. In his rage the young man called his father a ruffian. 'Sir,' said to him Madame Desmoulins, 'it is said that you insulted Marie Antoinette on the way to the scaffold; you should have preserved some of your audacity for to-day.' She died without even turning pale. Dillon cried '*Vive le Roi!*' Grammont the elder wished to embrace his son, but the latter would not let him.

Germinal 25.—This morning I sent some hair of Madame Desmoulins to her father and mother. I gave the parcel to a Savoyard who did not know me, and directed him to take it to M. Duplessis' house, for I did not care about going there again. To-day we executed a nobleman, Jacques Antoine de la Barbière de Refluet, and three individuals of lesser importance.

Germinal 26.—Charles Mathias Dalençon de Neu-

Digitized by Google

ville, ex-count; Marie Jeanne de Lescale and Victoire de Lescale; Marie Constance Galley, nun; Aimé Courradin de Lanone; Louis Étienne Brevet de Beaujour, barrister at Angers; Jean-Baptiste Lareveillière, president of the tribunal of Maine-et-Loire; Louis Diensic de Mizaugé, ex-count; and Jean François Antoine Tissier Ducloseau, magistrate, were executed to-day.

Germinal 27.—Hugues Louis Jean Pelletier de Chambure, master of the post-office at Arras; François Constant Cassegrain, ex-curate of Pithiviers; Jacques Huet, hairdresser; Pierre Laville, shoemaker and member of the revolutionary committee of the section of the Tuileries; and Paul Lapeyre, surgeon, were guillotined to-day.

Germinal 28.—A great deal is said of a new decree which is about to be issued on the proposition of Citizen St. Just, outlawing all foreigners and noblemen who should be found in Paris two days after the issue of the decree. No one could help smiling at the alleged conspiracy of Danton, Hérault de Séchelles, and Camille Desmoulins—the said plot has now become an article of faith in which one must believe or die. In a private conversation with Vadier, Dufourny tried to play the part of St. Thomas; Vadier forthwith denounced him at the Club des Jacobins, and at the requisition of Robespierre he has been expelled from the Club. He can consider himself lucky in getting off so easily. The other day I witnessed the arrest of a poor artisan because he said that Danton was a good fellow, and a better man than St. Just. To-day we led to the guillotine seven convicts,

Digitized by Google

Jérémie Baudot, monk; Jacques Pierre Chalot, curate of Marsal; Julien Decous, curate of Nouvillac; Charles Tibault Acor, Hippolyte Mermin, Pierre Louis Henry, and Hector Simille, tradesmen and labourers.

Germinal 30.—Since Dumas has succeeded to Herman as president of the Tribunal, trials take place in larger numbers, a prodigy which was thought impossible. Seventeen persons were sentenced to death yesterday; I executed them this morning. This execution was one of the most lamentable in which I ever took a part. The women were in a majority. Several among these women had their children in the carts. Jacques Joseph Laborde, banker; Arthur Gustave Geneste, banker; Pierre Haringue de Guibeville, nobleman, late president of the parliament of Paris; Marie Haringue de Bonnaire; Marie Charlotte de Bonnaire; Marie Louise de Charras, of Angoulême; François Mesnard de Chouzy; Sebastien Rollat, nobleman; René Rollat, officer; Louis Georges Gougenot; Anne Marie de Mesle, wife of Marshal de Mesle; Ange-Michel de Bellecourt, officer in the Russian service; Jeanne Marie Nogués, wife of Bellecourt; Marguerite Anne Gouvel; Jean Robin, Guibeville's valet; and François Mathieu Payma, servant of the younger Madame de Bonnaire—all convicted of conspiracy against liberty. The sight was affecting in the extreme, for the women cried and moaned.

Floréal 1.—The Tribunal has judged, in the name of Revolution, those who used to judge in the name of Justice, and to-day I led to the guillotine the same magistrates whose sentences I was wont to carry out. I

Digitized by Google

had been much moved on seeing them leaving the Tribunal, to the number of twenty-five of the parliament of Paris and provincial parliaments, advancing in a file, the presidents first, and the others behind them, grave and austere as if they had been going to some ceremony. When they were brought to the Hall of the Dead, and when President Bochard de Sarron held out his hands to me, I trembled, and could not help showing consternation; whereupon the president said to me:

'Do what the law orders. Even an unjust law is a law.'

In the cart, and before the guillotine, they retained the same attitude: no tears, or reproaches, or clap-trap bravery. They died with the serene pride of the old Romans, who waited for the Gauls.

Floréal 2.—The Jacobins have been engrossed with a mighty affair. The tax-collector of their section thought that patriotism had nothing to do with the payment of rent, especially when this rent was to go into the coffers of the State; he therefore wrote to the committee of the Club asking for what was due to the nation. Indignation was great at this audacity, and Collot d'Herbois asked that the misdemeanant should be sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The times have, then, returned when great lords used to throw their creditors out of the windows—with this difference, that the window is now a loop-hole, and is called a guillotine. Six executions to-day.

Floreal 3.—Great citizens, good and righteous men, now appear uninterruptedly on the guillotine. Those

Digitized by Google

who govern should understand that this daily butchery cannot but become hateful, and disgust the population. The fellows who usually follow my carts, ferocious as they are, are getting milder, and, as to the good citizens, they now close their doors and windows as soon as I appear in the street with the convicts who are to suffer. To-day we had to deal with Citizen Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the King's former defender; he was arrested at his country-house, with all his family. President de Rosambeau, executed the day before yesterday, was his son-in-law. His daughter and granddaughter were executed with him to-day. After his arrest he was incarcerated in the Port-Libre; on arriving there he met one of his former clerks, who exclaimed: 'What! you here, sir?' 'Yes, my friend,' answered Malesherbes, smiling; 'I am becoming a scamp in my old age, and that is why they put me in prison.' D'Esprémenil, who was so famous in the old parliament of Paris, was also among the convicts. He had recanted his republican opinions, and had defended royalty as warmly as, at first, he had attacked it. After August 10 he was badly beaten and wounded by a party of insurgents who recognised him. Péthion having come to his help, D'Esprémenil pointed to his wounds, saying: 'And I, too, M. Péthion, used to be the people's idol.' Malesherbes was firm and even cheerful. As I approached him he was winding up his watch; he continued to do so, saying: 'One moment, friend.' When his hair was cut, and his hands tied, he asked me to put his wig on his head again, not, he said, because

Digitized by Google

he was afraid of catching a cold, but because he disliked cold weather. He then went up to Chateaubriand, his granddaughter's husband; the latter sank down on his knees, as also his wife and Madame de Rosambeau, Malesherbes' daughter, and they received his blessing. He stumbled in descending the staircase of the Conciergerie, and nearly fell; upon which, speaking to his children, he said: 'This is what one may call a bad omen; a Roman would go in again.' His children sat near him in the cart; their conversation was very touching: they assured the old man that they were only too happy to die with him. Malesherbes answered with the utmost coolness, and was firm to the end. D'Esprémenil was next to Le Chappelier, also sentenced to death, who, in the Constituent Assembly, had been his most obstinate opponent. As we were starting, the latter said to his companion: 'Sir, in a few seconds we shall have the solution of a terrible problem.' 'What problem?' 'That of knowing who of us two will be hooted by the mob!' 'We shall be hooted both,' answered D'Esprémenil. With the above died Jacques Geoges Thouret, member of the Constituent Assembly; Frederick Hill, commissioner in the department of Bas-Rhin; Dolphine Antonine de Rochechouart, Duchess du Châtelet, Béatrix de Choiseul, Duchess of Grammont, Marie Victor Boucher de Rochechouart, Viscountess de Pontville, Pierre Parmentier, tax collector, and Louis Philippe Mousset, carpenter.

Floréal 5.—When the King of Prussia entered Verdun last year, some of the inhabitants presented him

Digitized by Google

with the keys of the town; the wives and daughters of the burghers offered him wreaths of flowers; they were present at a ball given in the enemy's honour by the royalist municipality, and the women danced with the Prussian officers. The ringleaders have been tried for this crime by the Revolutionary Tribunal—thirty-four male and female inhabitants have been sentenced to death. The youth of three of the women it was hoped might save their lives, but this attenuation of their crime was only admitted in favour of Claire Tabouillot and Barbe Henry, who were seventeen years of age; their sentence was that they should be shown on the guillotine for six hours. Had to execute the thirty-four culprits to-day, and a terrible day's work it was.

Floréal 6.—This morning at ten o'clock Claire Tabouillot and Barbe Henry were shown on the guillotine on which their mothers and sisters were killed yesterday. They were to remain there six hours, but after an hour Barbe Henry fainted. Claire Tabouillot was so pale that everybody saw she was about to faint also. The mob cried 'Enough!' So Henri, my son, went to the House of Justice to inform Fouquier-Tinville of what was taking place. Naudin, Fouquier's substitute, ordered him to untie the girls and send them to prison, which was done at half-past twelve. At four o'clock we executed Mathieu Schweryer, bootmaker; Jacques Pommerage, hairdresser, sentenced for singing anti-republican songs; François Bonin, printer, who had called Robespierre a conspirator; Jean François Noël, potter; Jeanne Elizabeth Bertault, Nicolas Emmanuel

Digitized by Google

Lescoffier, Jean Nicolas Lallemand, priest; Jean Claude Jacquot, lawyer, &c., &c.—twelve in all.

. . . . . .

Floréal 9.—To-day Citizen Fouquier behaved like a man. When he was compelled to sell his office as barrister of the Châtelet, the Civil lieutenant, Augrand d'Alleray, was very kind to him. Fouquier remembered it. Augrand d'Alleray had been imprisoned at Port-Libre; he was an inoffensive old man, and there was little chance of his being brought up for judgment. Unfortunately his name was found, by chance, in a list of dangerous prisoners. Fouquier proved that he wished to save him, for he recommended him to the jurors; but Augrand refused to be let off. With him were executed Aymond Charles François de Nicolaï, late president of the Grand Council, and thirty-three other convicts, most of whom were noblemen and magistrates.

Floréal 10.—Gamain, the locksmith, who denounced Louis XVI., has addressed a petition to the Convention, asking for a reward. The Assembly has granted the man's petition.

Floréal 11.—Stanislas de Langanerie, chevalier de St. Louis, convicted of having been one of the Knights of the Dagger, was executed to-day. It is now a long time since we had only one convict to put to death, and the people hardly took the trouble to look on. The Tribunal to-day acquitted fifteen persons. Several among these lucky persons had, according to provincial custom, added the name of Marat to their names. Before discharging them Dumas, who presided, made them a little

Digitized by Google

speech on the duties imposed by the patronage of the great citizen.

Floréal 12.—We executed seven plebeians and two noblemen.

Floréal 13.—Denys Corbillet, upholsterer, and lieutenant in the National Guard; Pierre Diacon, inspector of arms at the arsenal; and Léonce Pitrat, curate of Livemont, suffered to-day.

Floréal 14.—We led to the Place de la Révolution the officers and grenadiers of the battalion 'des Filles Saint-Thomas,' who alone, on the 10th of August, defended the King. There were twelve of them. Denys Repoux de Chevagny suffered with them.

. . . . . .

Floréal 17.—To-day the Convention issued a decree by which the general farmers are to be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Citizen Dupin, a deputy, has written the report against them. The twenty millions given up by them to the nation cannot save them, I fear. They were speaking at the House of Justice of the trial of Elizabeth, sister of the King, which is soon to take place. Nine executions yesterday; twenty-three to-day.

Floréal 19.—The trial of the general farmers was concluded to-day. Four were acquitted—Sanlot, Delaage the younger, Bellefait, and Delatante: all the others, twenty-eight in number, were condemned to death, and executed at two o'clock this afternoon. One of them, Lavoisier, was a great chemist. He asked for a delay of a fortnight in order to achieve a discovery; but his brief was not acceded to. Most of the convicts seemed

Digitized by Google

to have no regret. Papillon d'Hauteville said, addressing the mob: 'The only thing which annoys me is that I have such disreputable heirs.'

Floréal 20.—Madame Elizabeth was taken to the Conciergerie this morning. My son saw her; she is, he told me, very wan and pale. She was reading a prayer-book. Fouquier will question her in the course of the night.

Floréal 22.—I was present during part of Madame Elizabeth's trial. Dumas presided; fifteen jurors were in the box, and Lindon was prosecutor. An arm-chair was given to the King's sister, a favour which surprised me. A thousand rumours were circulated concerning this sad affair. Some people say that Robespierre visited Madame Elizabeth in prison, and hinted that she could appear on the throne of her ancestors if she would marry him. All this of course is absurd. Others say that he was strongly opposed to the trial. If one may judge by Dumas' polite manners with the princess, there is some likelihood of this being true. Elizabeth answered all questions put to her with much calm and presence of mind. She denied the charges brought against her. It was pretty certain that she would be condemned, and the sentence of death passed by the court surprised no one. As a conspiracy cannot but be concocted by several persons, twenty-three prisoners were convicted with the princess.[1]

I left the Hall of Justice to prepare for the execution.

[1] The names given in the original text of the diary are in the present case, as in many other places, omitted. They do not add to the interest of the executioner's notes, and these nomenclatures are often tedious.—N. ED.

Digitized by Google

At four o'clock, Desmorets, one of my assistants, brought me the order. I was about to enter Richard's room when I saw a lady, who held up a handkerchief to her eyes. I recognised the princess, and entered. Richard told me that she conversed with his wife, and wanted to know how the Queen died. While Henri and the assistants were 'preparing' the other convicts, Richard at length told Madame Elizabeth that I was waiting. She bade farewell to Richard's wife, and followed him to the special room reserved for women. When I entered she was already seated, with her hair flowing over her shoulders. She was praying with fervour. Her hair was auburn, very long and thick. Just before I took her hands to bind them, she made the sign of the cross. She did not appear to me as thin as Henri told me. Her waist was rather thick, like the King's, and her face very full. The most apparent trace of imprisonment was her extreme pallor. When I returned with her to the other convicts, the latter bowed low to her. She spoke to the Loménies, but I could not catch her words. . . . Madame Elizabeth was in the first cart with the two Loménies, the bishop, and the late minister. The bishop spoke to her of God, and she listened with devotion.

As leader of the conspiracy she was to be executed last; I had received very stringent orders on that point. She remained in the midst of the gendarmes whilst her companions were being guillotined. Two of the convicts, Montmorin and Lhote, cried, '*Vive le Roi!*' which greatly infuriated the mob. The princess heeded not what was

Digitized by Google

going on around her. When her turn came, she went up the steps, slightly trembling. She was strapped down and guillotined in a moment. Her body was buried at Mousseaux, and a quantity of quicklime was spread over it. Her companions in death were buried in the same cemetery. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood have discovered that bodies, instead of being taken to the cemetery of St. Roch, are now carried to their quarter, and they are much discontented.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLI.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

THE dark sky under which we live is beginning to clear up. On the 18th Robespierre made a speech in which he was really eloquent, probably because he was sincere. After this speech the same deputies who had cheered the abjuration of Gobel, and the scenes which took place in consequence, have declared, in a decree, that the nation recognises the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. Many people joke about the Maker which the law now provides; but all those who suffer are in some degree consoled by that recognition. Eight executions to-day.

Floréal 23.—The hopes I expressed yesterday are not yet to be realised. To-day I was ordered by Citizen Fouquier to provide myself with additional assistants. It is said that the prisoners are conspiring in the different prisons of Paris, and that short work must be made of them. If they do conspire, there is nothing astonishing. I see constantly what takes place in the Conciergerie, and I can pretty well guess what occurs elsewhere. In every prison there are agents whose sole mission it is to

Digitized by Google

make the prisoners talk. They tell them that they can perhaps obtain their liberty; and then, when the unsuspecting prisoners answer, the spy denounces them. I have engaged sixteen new assistants. They are organising the service of the guillotine as if it were to last for ever. Some of my assistants must now remain in permanency at the Conciergerie. The clerks of the court will now go to the Place de la Révolution in turns. Eight executions to-day.

Floréal 24.—Executed Étienne Mauger, monk of the Abbey of Caen; Félix Gardé and François Peton, postmen; George Souen, soldier; Jacques Rollet d'Avaux, nobleman; Jean-Baptiste Ubeleski, &c.—nine in all.

Floréal 25.—Executed Charles Auguste Prévost d'Arlincour, general farmer, father of the D'Arlincour who was guillotined on the 19th. He was seventy-six years old. The *sans-culottes* are more infuriated against those who are said to have sophisticated their tobacco than if they had turned their bread into stone. They had no pity for the old man. Besides, it would be imprudent for any one to show any sympathy for any prisoner. The number of spies who usually escort us has been doubled since the inhabitants of the Rue St. Honoré have taken to closing their doors and windows whenever a *cortége* passes. Seven men and a woman suffered with D'Arlincour.

Floréal 26.—Pierre Alexandre Joseph Chiavary, captain in the army; Antoine Baptiste Tassin, lawyer; Ernest Meynier, late deputy; André Fissard, solicitor; Henri Henry, clerk of the Tribunal of Newarden; Marc

Digitized by Google

Blass, grocer, all convicted of conspiracy against the sovereignty of the people; and Frédéric Bernard, draper at Sens, were executed to-day.

Floréal 29.—The son of Bonarée-Corberon, ex-president, executed on the 1st of this month, was guillotined to-day, and with him twelve other convicts. This morning I received the visit of a maniac, who asked me to look at a projected guillotine with three knives, which he had invented. He really amused me. His pride and his hatred against aristocrats were really very comical. His discovery, he said, would consolidate the Republic. He left me, and went to Fouquier-Tinville.

Prairial 3.—Leflot, a manager of the customs, was beheaded to-day. In Nivôse last, the wife of a royalist was wandering with her baby in the neighbourhood of Trégnier, suffering from cold and hunger, and risking starvation every day. No one cared to give her shelter, or even a mouthful of bread. A brave exciseman did what others were afraid to do: he concealed the woman and her child in the hollow of a rock, and gave them clothes, straw, and food. Good sentiments are as contagious as bad ones. The other excisemen remarked the frequent disappearances of their comrade, and soon found out his secret. They resolved to help the poor woman, in spite of the laws and decrees which ordered them to be relentless against royalists; and one night she was sent on board an English ship off the coast. Unfortunately they did not hold their tongues, and their act of charity became known at large. The captain wished to know who were the culprits, but none

Digitized by Google

would reveal the secret; and when Leflot threatened to pick out a number of his men at random and shoot them, they only laughed, and answered that he was too good a fellow to suit the action to the word. Captain Leflot was, as they said, a good and brave man; and he left the offence unpunished, hoping that it would be overlooked by the authorities. His generosity forfeited his life. Two persons were executed with him.

Prairial 5.—The despotism of the Committee has just been consecrated by murder. Two days ago a man tried to murder Collot d'Herbois; yesterday a girl tried to stab Robespierre. Collot's assailant was a native of Auvergne, named Ladmiral. He lived in the same house as Collot (42 Rue Favart). It is said that he intended to kill either Robespierre or Collot—perhaps both, if he could. He went to the Convention, intending to strike the two deputies there; but Robespierre and Collot were absent, so he returned home, and waited for the latter. Collot returned at one o'clock a.m.; Ladmiral, who lived on the fifth landing, was at the bottom of the staircase. He saw Collot's servant preparing to light her master up, and fired four pistols at him without effect. Collot, who is brave, made for the murderer, pursued him up the stairs, and tried to break his door open; but a patrol came up, and Collot was prevented with difficulty from entering first and arresting Ladmiral with his own hands. Citizen Geffroy, who seized the murderer, was wounded by him. The attempt on Robespierre's life was less serious. The girl who intended to kill him was so earnest in her entreaties to be shown into his presence

Digitized by Google

that she was arrested. She was searched, and in her pockets were found two pistols and a dagger. These two crimes to some extent confirm the rumours that there is an extensive conspiracy to murder the principal members of the Convention. To-day we executed Jean-Baptiste Durand, public functionary; François Paulin, teacher; Jean Antoine Pascal, lieutenant of gendarmes; Théodore d'Aumongeville, lieutenant in the army; Simon Tisserand, footman of the late Duke du Châtelet; Jean-Baptiste Gautier, &c.

Prairial 6 and 7.—The name of the girl who intended to murder Robespierre is Cécile Renaud. She is only twenty years of age. The Convention has issued a bulletin concerning the health of Citizen Geffroy, who was wounded in the Collot affair. The martyrdom to which Robespierre and Collot were exposed excites the envy of many of their colleagues. Vouland, among others, alleges that a woman tried to murder him. This woman is to appear to-day before the Tribunal. There is, however, every reason to believe that she never contemplated the act in question. Patriots attribute to the English the attempts against Robespierre and Collot. They charge them with inciting to the destruction of the members of the Convention. The Convention has just passed a decree which enacts that no English and Hanoverian soldiers shall be made prisoners. What will the French soldiers do?

Prairial 8.—The motions of the Jacobins and the Convention have an effect on the decisions of the Tribunal. To-day out of twenty-six prisoners only two

Digitized by Google

were acquitted, and we guillotined the others. Among these was one who richly deserved death. Jourdan, surnamed Coupe-tête by the inhabitants of Avignon, had committed the most horrible crimes. He acted as Schneider did, and excited the utmost terror in and around Avignon. He showed more bravery on the scaffold than Schneider. Twenty-three were guillotined after him.

Prairial 9.—The daggers of Citizeness Cécile Renaud are now reduced to two small knives, with which she could have hurt no one except herself. However, as she said that she wanted to see a tyrant, there is little hope of saving her. A great many arrests have been made. The Conciergerie received over fifty inmates to-day. Executed fourteen peasants.

Prairial 11.—Twelve executions to-day. I am told that a few days ago, Dumas, Fouquier, Brochet, Renaudin, and others were dining at Méot's, and that, being elated with wine, they called Méot up, and told him that he was about to be arrested and tried by the Tribunal. Poor Méot went down half dead with terror. Fortunately Barrère, who sometimes dines at Méot's, came in. The affrighted restaurateur threw himself at his feet, and implored his protection. As people were looking on, Barrère told Méot that the men upstairs were only joking, as indeed they were; but in the evening Dumas and Fouquier were summoned by the Committee of Public Safety, and severely reprimanded.

Prairial 12.—Thirteen convicts to-day.

Prairial 13.—Same number as yesterday.

Digitized by Google

Prairial 14.—Agents of the Committee of Public Safety now mingle with those who follow our carts to the scaffold. Every day they draw up a report of what has taken place around the guillotine. If their accounts are truthful, those who send them must not be satisfied. The people are getting more and more disgusted with this eternal butchery. Yesterday I heard cries of 'Enough!' and to-day for the first time there was one solitary hiss. Great preparations are taking place for the Festival of the Supreme Being on the 20th; the ceremony will take place in the National Garden, and as the *cortége* is to pass through the Place de la Révolution, I have received orders to remove the guillotine on the 19th.

Prairial 16.—The aspect of the Conciergerie has much altered of late. When the Revolutionary Tribunal began to sit, it had the appearance of a camp: the prisoners were animated; they walked about, laughed, sang, and talked; the greater number cared little for life. When, on returning from the guillotine, I used to tell one of the turnkeys what had taken place, and when he transmitted the news to them, I could hear them cheering those who had died pluckily, and drinking in honour of those of their companions who were set free. But since Danton's execution, the Conciergerie looked what it used to be before the Revolution—the darkest and gloomiest of prisons. The fever is passed, and now the prisoners are mournful. Rivière showed me a man named Rougane, whose four brothers were guillotined, and who is to be tried to-morrow—and be guillotined also, no doubt. This morning I executed the Marquis

Digitized by Google

de Biéville and his son, and fifteen other convicts. Among them were a mother, Madame de Goursac, and her son; the former was over eighty years old.

Prairial 17.—Citizen Robespierre was for the second time elected president of the Convention. Nevertheless, it appears that Billaud-Varennes, Ballot, Vadier, and others are secretly plotting to overthrow him. Barrère, who hesitates between the two parties, has given some consistency to these rumours, by saying in a report that the foreigner speaks of us and of our soldiers as *the people of Robespierre, Robespierre's soldiers, Robespierre's government*, &c. Robespierre is very indignant. Those who hope for some return to clemency affirm that he will break with the Terrorists, and play the part he would not allow Danton to assume. They say that he will pronounce the word 'clemency' in his speech to the people on the day of the Festival of the Supreme Being. Coming from him this word would be law; he is all-powerful. The seventy-three deputies incarcerated on May 21 live by him; his moderation towards them ensures him a compact majority in what is called the *Plain* of the Convention. He is master of the Commune, of the Tribunal, and of the Jacobins. He can be merciful if such is his will.

Prairial 18.—Days follow each other and are alike. Twenty-one more convicts to-day. There are some people who say that one gets used to blood; this is not true, when this blood is human blood. I do not speak of myself, but of my assistants, whom I observe. Two of them have been with me for the last

Digitized by Google

twelve years, four others were butchers' boys; there are at least two who are not worth a rope to hang them with, and yet there is not one who is not moved after a wholesale execution. The public perceives nothing, but often I see their legs tremble. When everything is finished, and they only see corpses around them on the scaffold, they look astonished and uneasy. If such is their impression what must be that of the people? Lavalette, formerly count and officer in the Guards, was executed to-day. He was imprisoned at La Bourbe with his wife, and was playing at battledore and shuttlecock with her in the courtyard when a turnkey came up and ordered Lavalette to follow him. 'What for?' asked Lavalette. 'To go to the Tribunal, and from thence to the guillotine!' answered the brute. The shock was so sudden that Madame de Lavalette lost her senses. With Lavalette were executed Joseph Aboulin, lieutenant in the dragoons; Joseph Tournier, priest; Theodore Delany and Patrick Roden, Irishmen, deserters; Jean Foiret, public scribe; Étienne Félix de Forceville, nobleman; William Newton, Englishman, colonel in the armies of the Republic; Mercien d'Aubeville, nobleman, and judge at Pithiviers; Antoinette Jacquemot, laundress; Dolphine Elizabeth Marchais; Emma Marguerite Guillier, &c.—twenty in all.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLII.

CHARLES HENRI SANSON'S DIARY—continued.

Prairial 21.—The festival of the Supreme Being took place yesterday. Flowers were brought from miles around in honour of the Divinity; but the pontiff did not pronounce the words of clemency which were expected. We removed the scaffold, and this gave some credence to rumours of amnesty. The hideous cesspool of blood which lies under the scaffold was covered with long and strong planks. Brilliant as the proceedings were, the day was not exactly a success. They say that it was the festival of discord, not of the Supreme Being. If Robespierre did not claim the finest privilege of royalty, clemency, he at least appropriated its haughty formalities. He is accused of having made the Convention wait for him, with having preceded the representatives, as if to show that they were only a gang of inferiors; even the elegance of his dress and the proportions of the banquet which he held are criticised, and for some irrepressible republicans these are unmistakable tokens of his royalist leanings.

Prairial 22.—To-day the Tribunal began the trial of the suspected people sent from the departments by the

Digitized by Google

representatives in mission. Thirteen inhabitants of the town of Corne appeared this morning. Ten were condemned, as were also three other prisoners. Executed the whole of them.

Prairial 25.—At last the brief of the inhabitants of the Rue St. Honoré has been granted. The day before yesterday, as I was going to bed, I was called to the House of Justice, where Royer, the substitute, ordered me to clear the Place de la Révolution of the scaffold, and to take it to the Place de la Bastille. The carpenters worked all night. The public of this new quarter has no liking for executions, for as soon as we appeared in the Rue St. Antoine with three carts full, we were hissed and otherwise ill received. The inhabitants of the Quartier St. Antoine are not so timid as those of the Place de la Révolution, and they made no secret of their disgust; when the execution took place almost everybody had gone away. The Committee have determined not to renew the experiment, and under pretence that the Place de la Bastille is too good a place for aristocratic blood, they have directed the scaffold to be transferred to the Place du Trône. So we passed another sleepless night. We are now to send the corpses to the St. Marguerite Cemetery.

Prairial 26.—The Revolutionary Tribunal has no shame. Last month it acquitted Fréteau, councillor of the parliament of Paris. This indulgence proved disagreeable to Fouquier-Tinville, but he soon found means to correct what in his conviction could only be the result of a mistake. He declared that the affair was

Digitized by Google

not legal, and made an order for a new trial. As a matter of course, Fréteau could not escape death, for Fouquier's hint to the jury was pretty plain, and he was executed to-day, together with thirty-five other convicts; twenty-six of the number were councillors of the parliament of Toulouse.

Prairial 27.—To-day I had trustworthy information concerning the body-guards, without which, it is said, Citizen Robespierre never goes out. I met him in a very out-of-the-way place, and his satellites consisted of a white-and-black dog. Martin, my assistant, proposed to me to see to this day's work; I accepted, for it was a long time since I promised to take my nieces to the country, and I was glad to get out of sight of the guillotine. We went through Clichy and got into the fields. The little girls romped in the fields, and I ran about with them; but my old legs soon had enough of this, and I sat down on the side of the road. Presently I saw a citizen, with a dog, who was coming up. The citizen looked at the children, who were trying to reach some wild roses in a hedge, and obligingly came to their help. He picked the flowers, and divided them between the two little girls. I saw the little ones kiss the citizen. They came up to me talking and smiling. It was then that I recognised the stranger. He wore a dark blue coat, yellow breeches, and a white waistcoat. His hair was powdered and carefully combed, and he held his hat in his hand. His gait was stiff, his head was slightly thrown backwards, and his face wore a look of gaiety which surprised me. Citizen Robespierre asked me if

Digitized by Google

the children were mine. I replied that they were my nieces; he congratulated me on their beauty. Mary made a small nosegay and offered it to him; he took it and stuck it in his buttonhole. He then asked her name, so, he said, as to remember her when the flowers should fade. The poor child not only gave her Christian, but added the other, whereupon Robespierre's face instantly changed. He said to me in a dry and haughty voice. 'You are——?' I bowed. For a few seconds he was thoughtful; he was evidently struggling against a repulsion which he could not master. At length he bent down, kissed the children very tenderly, called his dog, and went away without looking at me.

Prairial 28.—At present the prisons contain 7,321 prisoners, but the gaols are being rapidly emptied. They have begun with Bicêtre, thirty-seven inmates of which were executed to-day; others are waiting for trial. This selection of common criminals was premeditated; it is hoped thus to extinguish all interest on behalf of the political victims that are to follow on the guillotine. The rumour is again spread that there is agitation among prisoners. We know what that means. Howbeit this is what took place at Bicêtre: Two locksmiths named Lucas and Ballin—both convicted for theft—had planned an escape; they received from without a file with which they cut the iron bars of a window. But they were imprudent enough to say to their companions that they should be free on the morrow, and to propose to a man of the name of Voulagnos to escape with them. Voulagnos was a spy; he reported the pro-

Digitized by Google

jected escape, and the whole affair was discovered. This gave rise to the ingenious idea of inventing a plot among the prisoners of Bicêtre, whereof the object was to escape in order to murder the members of the Convention. All the prisoners designated by the spy Voulagnos were tried and executed.

Prairial 29.—A terrible day's work! The guillotine devoured fifty-four victims. My strength is at an end, and I almost fainted away. A caricature has been shown to me in which I am represented guillotining myself in the middle of a heath covered with headless bodies and bodiless heads. I do not boast of extraordinary squeamishness; I have seen too much blood in my life not to be callous. If what I feel is not pity, it must be a derangement of my nerves. Perhaps I am punished by the Almighty for my cowardly obedience to mock justice. For some time I have been troubled with terrible visions. I am taken with fever as soon as I enter the Conciergerie; it is like fire flowing under my skin. Abstemious as I am, it seems to me as if I were intoxicated—the people who are around me, the furniture, the walls, dance and whirl around me, and my ears are full of strange noises. I struggle against this feeling, but in vain. My hands tremble, and tremble so that I have been compelled to give up cutting the hair of the doomed prisoners. They are before me weeping and praying, and I cannot convince myself of the reality of what is going on. I lead them to death, and I cannot believe that they are going to die. It is like a dream which I strive to dispel. I follow the prepara-

Digitized by Google

tions for the tragedy, and I have no idea what is to occur next, and I discharge my functions with the mechanical regularity of an automaton. Then comes the thump of the knife which reminds me of the horrible reality. I cannot hear it now without a shudder. A kind of rage then takes possession of me. Forgetting that I ought to blame myself more than others, I abuse the gendarmes who, sabre in hand, have escorted the victims; I abuse the people who look on without raising a finger in their defence; I abuse the sun which lightens all this. At length I leave the scaffold, disposed to weep, although I cannot find a tear. Never were these sensations more violent than to-day. Ladmiral and Cécile Renaud were among the convicts of to-day, and the others were their so-called accomplices.

Since the 23rd the Committee of Public Safety sends lists of death to the Tribunal. The arrest of Naudin and Antonnelle, two jurors who would not admit that revolutionary right was above right of justice, shows that this Tribunal is no more than a sham. While he preaches against indulgence at the Jacobins, Robespierre nevertheless abstains from being present when these lists are being drawn up—that is to say, that he shirks the odium, so as to be able to show that he is guiltless of bloodshed. The other members of the Committee are aware of his tactics, and they gave as much importance as they could to the trial of the 'murderers of Robespierre,' thereby trying to sap his reputation by calling attention to his omnipotency.

In this affair they introduced two women, the St.

Digitized by Google

Amaranthes, who were acquainted with Robespierre the younger; and they spread the rumour that one of these women was Maximilian Robespierre's mistress, and that Maximilian insisted on her death because she surprised the secret of his aspirations to royalty.

All this was being whispered around the scaffold; but it was not this wily combination of the Committee which produced the deepest impression. Citizeness St. Amaranthe held at No. 50 of the Palais Égalité a gaming house, frequented by many influential men, and an equal number of adventurers—Danton, Hérault de Séchelles, Lacroix, Robespierre the younger, Desfieux, Proly, and the famous Baron de Batz, whom the police could never lay hands upon. Madame St. Amaranthe's daughter was young and pretty. When mother and daughter were arrested, their servants and friends were also taken. Maria Grandmaison, an actress of the Italian Theatre, and Marie Nicole Bouchard, her servant, were of the number. The latter was only eighteen years old, and she was so thin and delicate that she did not appear more than fourteen. When the poor little girl held out her hands to Larivière, he turned to Desmorets, my head assistant, and said: 'Surely this is a joke?' Desmorets shrugged his shoulders, and it was the little one who, smiling through her tears, answered: 'No, sir, it is serious;' whereupon Larivière threw down his cords, and exclaimed: 'Let some one else bind her. It is not my profession to execute children!' She was calm and resigned. There was a delay in starting. Red shirts had been ordered only for Ladmiral, Sainte-

Digitized by Google

nax, and the four Renauds.[1] An order came at the last moment directing all the culprits to be arrayed in the same garment. While the shirts were being fetched, little Nicole Bouchard sat down at her mistress's feet, and tried to console her. She asked leave to be with her in the same cart. I really believed that if she had begged for life, more than one would have freed her, and offered to take her place. What we felt the people felt also. The crowd was very large, owing to the proportions of the execution. The hundreds of gendarmes who escorted us, and the cannon which followed in the rear, had induced all Parisians to come out. Five or six young and pretty women were in the first cart, and their fate excited pity; but when poor little Nicole Bouchard was seen there was an explosion of indignation. Cries of 'No children!' rose numerous and loud. In the Faubourg St. Antoine I could see the women weeping. I was almost overpowered by this scene. I had looked at Nicole Bouchard at the Conciergerie, and her eyes, to my thinking, seemed to say: 'You will not kill me!' And yet she is dead now. She was the ninth. When she passed before me, I had to struggle with an inspiration, which whispered in my ear: 'Smash up the guillotine, and do not allow this child to die!'

My assistants pushed her on towards the knife. I turned away; my legs trembled, and I turned sick. It was Martin who had charge of the execution. He said to me:

[1] The red shirt was the garment of parricides.

Digitized by Google

'You are unwell. Go home, and trust to me for the rest.'

I did not answer, and left the scaffold. I was in a fever, and so scared that at the corner of the Rue Saint-onge, when a woman stopped me and begged, I thought the little girl was before me. This evening I thought I saw spots of blood on the tablecloth as I was sitting down to dinner.

Prairial 30.—No executions to-day. Remained at home, and read the papers. Robespierre's enemies have found another weapon to strike him with. There are some distracted women who recite prayers in his honour. If they could only persuade the masses that he suffers and encourages this, it would be all over with him; and that is just what Vadier tried to do in the sitting of the 27th. A police officer employed by the Committee has found out an old woman who pretends to be a prophetess, and who announces the advent of a new saviour. This saviour is Robespierre. Vadier made the most of this discovery.

Messidor 1.—From the 1st to the 4th of Messidor ninety-two convicts have been put to death.

The dead are beginning to frighten the living. The inhabitants of the Montreuil section, where we now send the dead bodies, have complained. They urged that the stench is horrible, and that, unless the small cemetery of St. Marguerite be closed, serious consequences cannot but ensue. After much hesitation the Commune has selected a new place for the burial of the exe-

Digitized by Google

cuted. This is the garden of the old convent of Picpus. The spot seems to be ill chosen; the soil is composed of pure clay, and it cannot absorb what is deposited in it. But, thank Heaven! this is no business of mine. My task ends on the scaffold. The Commune pays for 'crows' (undertakers), who receive the bodies from my assistants and bury them. Desmorets, my head assistant, goes with them. Whatever is found in the pockets of the convicts is taken to the Commune; the clothes, &c., are sent to the charities. To-day the Tribunal condemned a man under rather curious circumstances. His name was Doyen, and he was a wood merchant. He was wealthy and parsimonious. His fortune was much envied by his neighbours, and he was so afraid of getting into trouble that for a whole year he did not speak. He lived alone, and communicated by signs with those he had to deal with. When he was asked the time, he took out his watch and showed it to you without a word. This singular reserve was taken for pride, and his enemies became legion. One night the Tree of Liberty, planted in the public square of the town in which he lived, was uprooted, and, as a matter of course, the crime was attributed to Citizen Doyen. His house was searched. While the soldiers were searching the first floor, a gendarme was about to take up a log of wood and throw it into the grate, when Doyen rushed forward, exclaiming: 'Not this one!' This excited suspicion. An axe was procured, and, when the log was split, a number of golden louis dropped on the floor. This circumstance settled his fate. He recovered his

Digitized by Google

powers of speech before the Tribunal, but too late to save his life.

Messidor 6.—Fear of the guillotine has induced a prisoner of Les Madelonnettes to hang himself. Before tying the noose he wrote in the following terms to Robespierre: 'Virtuous Robespierre, provide for my wife, for now she has no means of livelihood.' This is the second prisoner who has commited suicide. The late *valet-de-chambre* of the Duke de Créqy, one Cuni, cut his throat with a razor a few days ago. Executed twenty-three men and four women. One of the men, a deserter of the name of Notter, had a dog. The animal was much attached to its master, and it was the cause of his arrest. The dog followed him to prison, and remained at the door until the carts came out of the yard. It recognised its master, and, barking with joy, followed us to the Place du Trône. When the soldier alighted he patted the poor beast and asked several persons to take and keep it; but no one dared. When the time for separation came, the dog would not leave its master, and followed him up to the platform. One of my men threw it down; but the dog rushed up the steps again, and began to howl dismally; whereupon a gendarme pinned it with his bayonet. Strange to say, the people, who can stand and see Christians murdered, took the dog's part. Stones were aimed at the gendarme, and he narrowly escaped with his life. A workman took up the dog, and carried it away.

Messidor 7.—There was a time when the women were, as a rule, stronger and pluckier than the men.

Digitized by Google

Not so now. They weep, tremble, and beg for mercy. We have had a fearful day. The Faubourg St. Antoine cannot forget it. My carts contained twenty-three women of different ages and social standing. Each turn of the wheel was marked by a sob. Their shrieks were awful to hear. The crowd dispersed, and we made our way along deserted streets. My men were more than usually dark and sullen. One of them said: 'They compel us to disgrace the guillotine.' I was not left to suffer alone to-day.

Messidor 8.—The other prisoners of Bicêtre, who were compromised by Valagnos' denunciation, were guillotined to-day. Among these was Osselin, a deputy of the National Assembly. He had given shelter to one Madame Charry, an *émigrée*, in a country house situated at Marly. This generous deed at first cost him his liberty, and afterwards his life. He confided in a ruffian whom he believed to be his friend. The man saw Madame Charry, fell in love with her, and threatened her with immediate arrest if she did not return his affection. As a matter of course, Madame Charry refused; and on the following day she was arrested, tried, and executed.

As the law which punishes with death whoever shall shelter an enemy of the Republic was not yet passed, Osselin was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and sent to Bicêtre, where he was fain to mingle with criminals of the worst class. His former position, and, above all, his connection with Danton's party, pointed him out to those who had the mission to clear the prisons, and he was arraigned. Osselin, it appears, resolved not to

Digitized by Google

appear on the guillotine. He found a large nail in the ceiling of his cell, and struck himself three times with it; but he survived his wounds. When we came to fetch Osselin the doctor of the Conciergerie humourously observed that it was useless to take him to the scaffold, as he had but a few moments to live. Nevertheless we carried him away. Poor Osselin called for death, and tore away his bandages. The doctor, who accompanied us, told him that he need have no fear, that the guillotine was a long way off, and that he might possibly die on the way; and, in fact, when we reached the Place du Trône, Osselin was pale and stiff, and to all appearance dead. I felt so sure of it that I told Desmorets to throw a blanket over the corpse, and leave it in the cart; but the doctor, who was still with us, said that Osselin was still alive, and that the sentence should therefore be carried out. As I was hesitating, he said to me: 'Fool, if he is dead, of what consequence is it whether he reaches the other world with or without his head? Think of what might happen to us if he were still alive!' Osselin was carried to the weigh-plank, but not a muscle moved when the knife came down; and I am firmly persuaded that we guillotined a corpse.

My grandfather's diary here comes to an end. He gives no warning of his intention to discontinue this daily record of his bloody mission, but I think I can explain this sudden conclusion. He was a strong and callous man; but few, even among the hardest, could

Digitized by Google

have resisted the work which the Revolutionary Tribunal provided for him. His constitution gave way, and his spirits also. He had a violent attack of *delirium tremens* after the execution of Robespierre's so-called murderers. Martin, his brother, who usually took his place whenever there was occasion for doing so, perceived that the old executioner was breaking down. He was pale, agitated, and uneasy. The slightest noise made him shudder, and he avoided his relatives. He no longer related to his wife and children the scenes in which he acted the chief part; and his usual state of mind was a dark moodiness, which he retained to his last day. This easily explains the interruption of his diary. The reader may have noticed that his last notes are far less precise and minute than the first portion of his information; in the last days of Prairial he seldom mentions the names of victims.

True it is that, at the time, the guillotine was *commercially* organised, and when its chief functionary did not score down the names of the guillotined, one of his assistants acted as his book-keeper. Desmorets, whose name Charles Henri Sanson frequently mentions, and whose grandson is now executioner at Bordeaux, joined the duties of clerk to that of chief assistant. I have in my hands a complete list, drawn up by him, of *all* the persons guillotined during the Revolution; and as the number of the victims has been unduly exaggerated, I have, for the behoof of my readers, made a *résumé* of the executions that took place in Paris during the revolutionary period. This *résumé* is affixed here-

Digitized by Google

TABLE SUMMARISING THE EXECUTIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN PARIS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD, JULY 14, 1789, TO OCTOBER 21, 1796.

Age of the Executed	Number	Age of the Executed	Number
Under 18 years of age	22	From 70 to 80 years	103
From 18 to 20 years	45	Above 80 years	9
From 20 ,, 25 ,,	336		
From 25 ,, 50 ,,	1,669	Men	2,548
From 50 ,, 60 ,,	528	Women	370
From 60 ,, 70 ,,	206		

Profession and Social Position of the Executed	Number	Profession and Social Position of the Executed	Number
Members of the Church, Bishops and Archbishops	6	Gentlefolks of both sexes without profession	381
Marshals of France and Lieutenant-Generals	25	Officers and soldiers	365
Magistrates, members of the ancient Parliaments	246	Writers and journalists of both sexes	275
Ecclesiastics, priests, monks, &c.	319	Artists	16
Members of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies	39	Tradesmen of both sexes	275
Members of the Convention	45	Artisans	391
Members of the Commune	73	Servants of both sexes	129
Liberal professions, financiers, barristers, doctors, lawyers, functionaries	479	Labourers and peasants	105

Total for both sexes : 2918.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIII.

MY FATHER GOES INTO THE ARTILLERY.—HIS MS.

I MUST now beg leave to return for a time to our family affairs. My father left me a MS. account of his services in the artillery, which I will presently give, as a curious illustration of the importance the revolutionists proposed to give to the functions of executioner. This account contains some interesting observations on the change of opinions which had taken place in favour of the executioner. The Republic treated us better than the Monarchy: it had too often recourse to our services not to reward us for the trouble. We were no longer shunned and despised; representatives of the people, club orators, celebrated *sans-culottes* fraternised with the executioner. At one time there was a question of devising a glorious name worthy of the grandeur of our mission. It was very seriously proposed to call the executioner the 'Avenger of the People,' to dress him in an imposing costume whereby all could identify him as one of the most important functionaries of the nation. David, the great painter, called on my grandfather and showed him a drawing of a costume he had specially

Digitized by Google

devised for him. Charles Henri declined the honour, and expressed a wish to dress just as other people did.

But this was but one of the slightest favours bestowed on my grandfather; the people often cheered him on his way to the scaffold, and many ran up to him after executions offering to drink with him, and so forth.

I now leave the pen to my father, whose account requires no further introduction:

'It was on a Sunday of the month of October 1793, the call was being beaten, and citizens of our quarter were hurrying to the usual place of meeting, the St. Laurent Church. I went there myself. After the sitting, as I was conversing with some friends, I was accosted by a numerous party, composed of working men. One of the men addressed me in the following terms:

'"Citizen Henri Sanson, we are the first party of the men who are to form the new company of gunners of this section. We are about to elect our officers, and as we know you to be a good patriot, we shall be much flattered if you will join us."

'This request surprised me very much. At first I was strongly tempted to refuse; but I did not care to give offence to my would-be friends, and I may as well confess that I was gratified at their politeness. I made a few objections, but they were soon overruled, and I yielded with a good grace.

'My new companions forthwith took me to the hall where the election of officers was to take place. One can imagine my surprise when, on my arrival, I found

Digitized by Google

myself elected by acclamation president of the electoral assembly before I knew precisely what I was about. The vote for the rank of captain began, and my surprise exceeded all bounds when I perceived that everybody voted for me. I was both flattered and moved, but, conscious as I was of my inability to discharge functions of which I had not the slightest notion, I attempted to decline the honour. My modesty, however, was of no avail, and I was elected. My uncle, who was present, was made a sub-lieutenant, and one of my intimate friends was appointed sergeant. My friend, whose name was Masson, was beside himself with joy. He was witty, sensible, and well-educated. We were of the same age, and soon became very intimate; he came to dine at my father's every Sunday—the only day on which my father could receive the few friends it is possible to have in our profession. It was after one of these dinners that the adventure I have just related happened to us.

'Masson was not of our section; he lived in the Île Saint-Louis, and he was in fear that this circumstance might prevent him from accepting his promotion. But he was soon reassured.

'As for me, I went to a sergeant of my company who had been a gunner and had some good notions of artillery; the good man gave me lessons, and what he knew he very soon imparted to me. But it was all very well to know how to obey; the question was, how could I learn how to command? But where there's a will there's a way. I took lessons from other friends of mine,

Digitized by Google

and at last I was enabled to undertake my command without exposing myself too much to sarcasm. Moreover the Government took good care to perfect our military education, and when we were sufficiently proficient, our four companies—those of the North, Bondy, Bonne-Nouvelle, and Mauconseil—were assembled on the Boulevard Bondy, where they manœuvred twice a week. Meanwhile, by means of a few good breakfasts, I persuaded our instructor to give me private lessons.

'The Government proposed to make serious use of us. While our organisation was being provided for, a pay was awarded to the men. It was thus graduated:

30 sols for privates,
45 sols for corporals,
3 livres 15 sols for sergeants,
4 livres 10 sols for the sub-lieutenant,
6 livres for the lieutenant,
7 livres 10 sols for the captain.

'As may be seen, I was better off than the others.

'This state of things lasted three months, at the end of which we were definitely organised after the model of the dismounted gendarmes. Our companies were composed of fifty-one men fully equipped.

'We did not wait long for active service, and while some companies were being sent to La Vendée, and others to Lyons, mine was sent, together with another company styled "Des Droits de l'Homme," into La Brie, where an insurrection had just occurred.

'The alarm was unfounded; for if the movement was spontaneous, it was quelled with the same rapidity.

Digitized by Google

It was said that 20,000 inhabitants of La Brie and of the neighbourhood of Coulommiers had taken to arms at the bidding of the priests and other ecclesiastics, supported by the most influential persons of the locality. When we arrived all was finished, and the garrison of Coulommiers, that is to say, a company of the 16th cavalry regiment, sufficed to quell the great sedition. The effective force of this company was only of eighty-four men; but what was more curious, the captain and the two lieutenants were away at the time of the rising, and it was the sub-lieutenant, a boy of fifteen, who advanced at the head of his small company and charged the seditious gathering. This boldness was crowned with success. The affair took place between Maupertuis and Coulommiers, and as soon as the peasants found themselves charged by this feeble detachment of cavalry, they dispersed and took to flight after firing a few shots which wounded no one. The chasseurs then surrounded the remaining insurgents and led them back to Coulommiers, where they shut them up in a church, the prison being too small to contain them.

'When we arrived we were arrayed in order of battle on the public place. We loaded our pieces with grape-shot and threatened to discharge them into the church if any symptom of rebellion was shown by the prisoners.

'This resolute attitude intimidated the multitude, and extinguished all further thought of insurrection. We had with us 500 men of infantry and a squadron of cavalry, which, with ourselves and the garrison of Cou-

Digitized by Google

lommiers, made up an effective force of 800 or 900 men. This force was more than enough to put down more important seditions. The youthful lieutenant who had so bravely taken the initiative of repression was much congratulated. When excitement had subsided, it was perceived that we were far too numerous for the small town of Coulommiers; so our troops were sent in detachments to neighbouring villages. One detachment went to Le Ferté-Gaucher, another to the Abbey of Farmontière, and a third to Rozay-en-Brie. I remained in Coulommiers with my company and the remainder of the troops. We formed a staff, composed of at least thirty officers; we took our meals together, and the greatest harmony prevailed amongst us. I little thought that circumstances would eventually alter all this, and exclude us from social intercourse.

'I discharged my functions with great zeal, maintaining stringent discipline, often drilling my company, and taking much pleasure in military life. We had no further trouble with the inhabitants of Coulommiers. The majority in the town was for us: it was only in the country that we were looked upon with hostility; but even this rural dislike soon disappeared. During the six months we remained at Coulommiers we had none of those grave conflicts with the civil authorities which elsewhere occurred between the military and civil powers. Nevertheless, the Revolutionary Tribunal of our town was strangely composed. Its president was a little hunchback, who was thoroughly imbued with the idea of his own importance. This ridiculous individual could

Digitized by Google

neither read nor write; but this did not stop him from ordering that all letters sent and received by the post-office should be forwarded to him for scrutiny.

'I was then in frequent correspondence with my family and a few friends in Paris, so that I was one of the first victims of this little caricature of a tyrant. A letter sent to me was handed over to him. He had the insolence to open it; but what will scarcely be believed is that the hunchback and his clerks could not read it, and actually had the impudence to send for me to know what it contained. I confess that I could hardly master my indignation; and, instead of giving them the explanation they asked for, I told them in unmeasured terms what I thought of their conduct. I threatened to write to the Paris authorities on the matter, and had the satisfaction to intimidate them sufficiently to make them give up my letter. The hunchback, moreover, asked me to overlook the matter, and apologised, saying that it was a mistake.

'I was glad that the affair went no further, for the letter was from my poor mother, and contained on the victims of the time expressions which might have appeared treasonable to the ludicrous president of the Tribunal.

'I again had difficulties with the Tribunal. This time it was concerning two men of my company, who had infringed one of the laws, in the making of which the local revolutionists were so prodigal. We were then under the empire of the law of *maximum*, of which the effects

Digitized by Google

were so deplorable. The farmers who would not sbumit to the *maximum* no longer brought their provisions to the market, and we were often obliged to go and fetch provisions in the country. Now the little hunchback and his colleagues hit upon an ingenious device. They forbade any one to go and procure provisions beyond the walls of the town.

'As they had no means of enforcing this absurd measure, they determined to do the work themselves. They repaired to the gates of the town, and became amateur excisemen. The hunchback and his colleagues were unfortunate, for the very first misdemeanants they pounced upon were two sappers of my company, who were tall and strong, and anything but disposed to allow themselves to be searched. A dispute followed, and this degenerated into a free fight, in which the civil power was much maltreated. The respectable president of the Revolutionary Tribunal received more kicks below his hump than was precisely agreeable, and his worthy companions fared no better.

'I was immediately summoned to appear before these terrible myrmidons of the law. Although I was not personally concerned in this affair, I had more trouble to settle it than the first one. Still I accomplished this delicate task. The little hunchback was furious, and wanted to arrest my two sappers and try them. With much difficulty I made him understand that he had no legal control over them : that it would be imprudent to give publicity to an affair which might

Digitized by Google

make people laugh at his expense. This last reason effectually convinced him, and he reluctantly gave up his hopes of redress.

'My stay at Coulommiers, which lasted about six months, was otherwise a quiet and pleasant one. I then received orders to go to Rozay-en-Brie, as temporary commander, with twenty-five artillerymen and thirty soldiers, commanded by a lieutenant, under my orders. I stayed there three weeks, up to the time when I was replaced by the "Contrat Social" company. I then returned to Paris, where I was to be mixed up with an affair which made me bitterly regret having accepted my rank.'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIV.

ARREST OF MY FATHER AND GREAT-UNCLE AFTER THE 9th OF THERMIDOR.

THE affair to which my father alludes in the last lines of his MS. was of a very grave kind, and nearly cost him his life. Some years elapsed before he wrote the following account of it:—

'After my expedition in Brie, I returned to Paris, where I had very little to do beyond the common exigencies of military service. I was drilling my men and perfecting myself in my technical studies, when I was called upon to undertake a mission, of which the result was nearly fatal to me and to one of my near relatives.

'It was on the 9th of Thermidor. Great anxiety prevailed throughout all the sections of the capital; for all kinds of rumours concerning the result of the struggle in the Convention were afloat. In our quarter we hurried to our usual place of meeting, and I was listening to what was going on, when there came a message from the Commune ordering me to go to the Place de Grève with my company. I hesitated a little, and I deemed it prudent to take the advice of the meeting. The answer

Digitized by Google

was that I was bound to obey, since the order was signed by the adjutant-general. I went even further. Being personally acquainted with the members of the Local Committee, I consulted them, observing that I still considered myself as belonging to the section, in spite of the exceptional circumstances which placed me under the orders of superior officers who had no concern in our local affairs. The members of the Committee praised me for my frankness, but were all of opinion that I should obey the order I had received.

'I therefore called my men together, arranged my cannon into batteries, and started for the Hôtel-de-Ville. There we waited for orders. Other companies arrived, and no one knew the reason of this display of arms. Some said that the National Convention was dissolved, and that a large number of its members had made a conspiracy; the others assumed that it was the Commune, at the head of which were Robespierre, Couthon, Saint-Just, and Henriot, general commander of the National Guard, which was dissolved. Public opinion hesitated between these two versions. When there is discord between the different authorities which constitute public power, the officer, whose mission it is to obey, is much perplexed. At such a time of anarchy, officers were exposed to become the blind instruments of some faction, and this is just what happened to me.

'We were still waiting for orders when a young man, who wore the uniform of a superior officer, came up, and ordered us to report ourselves to the Commune. I immediately obeyed, and, accompanied by my uncle—sub-

Digitized by Google

lieutenant—and Sergeant Masson, I went up the stairs. We were ushered into a hall, where we had to certify our presence. We then retired.

'A moment after, the same officer, followed by an escort of cavalry, came to order us to go to the Préfecture de Police. We marched away, and, after crossing the court of the Sainte-Chapelle, we halted in the smaller Rue de Jerusalem. The Prefecture, or Bureau Central, as it was then called, was of the province of the Commune. We remained shut up in an enclosure near the Palais du Justice, without any news of what was going on outside, and not daring to move for fear of transgressing our orders.

'All was finished at eight o'clock P.M. The Convention triumphed; Robespierre and his friends were arrested; the Hôtel-de-Ville was captured. Up to the last moment we had no knowledge of these events. At last three citizens of our section came to apprise us of what had occurred, and to urge upon us the necessity of a prompt return to our quarter. We had been the ignorant and passive auxiliaries of the conquered party, and our predicament was very awkward. The three citizens only came at ten o'clock. On hearing of the peril to which we were exposed, we immediately prepared to go. The commander of the picket of the Prefecture wanted to oppose our retreat; but I threatened to fire upon him and his men, and we marched away without hindrance. Without delay I went to our head-quarters, where I drew up a report of our doings during the day.

'It soon became evident that I was very seriously

Digitized by Google

compromised. My uncle and I were committed for trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal, for the passive part we had enacted during the day. We were arrested (as also Sergeant Masson) in the first days of Fructidor. The main charge against us was that we had signed a presence sheet at the Hôtel-de-Ville. On this sheet, after our signatures, an unknown hand had written, "And have taken the oath." Now we had taken no oath at all; for had such a proposal been made to us, we could not but have perceived the snare prepared for us. This false mention had therefore been written after our departure. Many more citizens had been deceived in the same way.

'We were sent to the Conciergerie. The indictment mentioned the names of forty-one accomplices incarcerated with us. I was charged, among other crimes, "with having been seen in divers groups exciting to rebellion against the National Convention; with having helped to free Henriot, arrested by order of the Committee of General Safety; in having participated in the conspiracy of the Commune." As may be seen, I had good grounds for uneasiness; for one of these charges with the preceding Tribunal would have been enough to forfeit my life; but this Tribunal had been broken up after the events of Thermidor 9, and the superseding court was more moderate and indulgent.

'We were tried on the 15th of Fructidor. No witness could be found in corroboration of the first charge. As to the second, Citizen Dobourt, president of the Tribunal, happened to be among those who were present when

Digitized by Google

Henriot was rescued, and he affirmed that I had nothing to do with it. I could have brought twenty witnesses to the effect that my company had not stirred during the whole of the day. As to the third charge, it was the most serious, since we had really signed the presence-sheet. But our counsels, seeing that it was impossible to deny the fact, urged the question of intention, and this steered us out of danger.

'We were, I should add, admirably defended. Masson's cause was taken up by M. Boutron, my uncle's by M. Julienne, and mine by M. Chauveau-Lagarde. The latter, who had defended Marie-Antoinette, was especially eloquent. After some consideration the Tribunal acquitted us, and this decision was received with cheers. I confess that I felt much relieved. I had passed my days of captivity in the very same cell where Marie-Antoinette had been imprisoned. I had slept on her bed, and this circumstance suggested to me the idea of appealing to M. Chauveau-Lagarde, who had defended her.

When we were discharged, I ran to a room in the Palais de Justice where I knew my father was waiting for the issue of the trial. I embraced him, weeping with joy, but I was surprised to find a cloud over his countenance. Alas! I had forgotten that out of forty-one prisoners forty had been acquitted, but that the forty-first was to die on the scaffold on the following day.' [1]

[1] Joseph Julien Lemonnier, Civil Commissioner of the section of the Hôtel-de-Ville, executed on the 16th of Fructidor.

Digitized by Google

This manuscript speaks for itself. It shows us the son of the executioner of 1793 threatened in his turn with the paternal axe—a prisoner in the same cell as some of the royal victims of the Revolution, and appearing in his turn before the same Tribunal.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DEATH OF ROBESPIERRE.

ROBESPIERRE'S lease of power had nearly come to an end. A reaction had set in, and the dictator's enemies leagued together and began to plot his overthrow and death. He had at first for enemies the friends of Danton and Camille Desmoulins, a few deputies of that faction of the Convention that was called the *Plaine*, and the deputies he had personally attacked for their conduct during their missions. His pretensions to Spartan purity, his dogmatic and absolute way of speaking, the authority he had gained, his very eminent qualities of statesmanship, as well as his ambition and his disdain for the prejudices of justice and humanity, had excited animosity and envy. When almost all had a right to suppose that not only their liberty but their lives were in danger, all met on the common ground of relentless hostility.

Tallien was the bitterest of Robespierre's foes. He had two lives to defend—his own, and that of a woman

[1] The circumstantial account of the execution of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Couthon is as furnished to the editor of these Memoirs by his father, who had them from Charles Henri Sanson.

Digitized by Google

he loved—Madame de Fontenay, daughter of Cabarrus, the banker, arrested at Robespierre's bidding. The whole of the Montagne was united in one common thought—the overthrow of the triumvirs; for when Robespierre was spoken of, Couthon and Saint-Just were always included in the anathema. At Tallien's instigation the anti-Robespierrist coalition grew stronger every day; but Robespierre was so feared that no one yet attempted to attack him openly. The storm did not burst for a long time, and at certain moments it was doubtful whether Robespierre's enemies would conquer; but when it did burst on the 9th of Thermidor, its fury was so irresistible that the dictator was swept away, and could not even say a word. His arrest, and that of Saint-Just, Couthon, and Lebas, was decreed.

While the Convention was sealing the fate of its most formidable members, another strange scene was taking place on the way to the guillotine. Forty-five prisoners had been condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Just as sentence was being passed, the report that Robespierre and his friends were about to be judged in their turn reached the Tribunal. There was immense excitement, especially among the convicts, who hoped that this circumstance might save their lives. Charles Henri Sanson, who was superintending the toilet of the convicts, was not less excited, for he felt that things might go otherwise on the morrow. He therefore determined to try and gain time, and finally to obtain the postponement of the execution for twenty-four hours. He supposed that the first thought of the

Digitized by Google

Convention would be for the unfortunate creatures who were going to suffer by his hands. He went to the Palais de Justice in quest of Fouquier-Tinville, but this terrible functionary had just left it. However, my grandfather was shown the house where he had gone to dine. He found him, and exaggerating the state of effervescence of the faubourgs, he suggested the necessity of putting off the execution. Fouquier answered with a gesture of impatience: 'This has nothing to do with us. Sentence has been passed; nothing can impede its immediate execution.'

Charles Henri Sanson returned to the Conciergerie. The sinister preparations for death were terminated, the forty-five prisoners were ready. Some were weeping, others praying—all were in the highest state of excitement, for the agitation of the executioner, no less than the confusion of the judges, had escaped their notice, At last my grandfather gave the signal for departure, but he said to Larivière: 'We shall not go further than the Bastille; people are so tired of this sort of thing that they will deliver the prisoners and prevent the execution. So much the better!'

A few cries of 'Mercy!' 'No guillotine!' rose on the quays, but that was all. The crowd was so compact on the Place de la Bastille that the *cortége* advanced with much difficulty. The cries now became more numerous and more vehement. My grandfather, who was in the first cart, bent towards a young man named Couter de Boulot, who was near him, and said:

'It seems to me that our parts are about to change,

Digitized by Google

and that *we* have a chance of being executed in your stead.'

The poor fellow's intellect was so confused that he did not seem to understand.

'Yes,' continued Charles Henri, 'if I were in your place and you in mine, I don't know whether I could resist the temptation of escaping.'

Couter de Boulot looked at Charles Henri, but did not move; but one of the women understood Charles Henri's intention, for she immediately addressed the crowd:

'Mercy, citizens! we are not enemies of the people! Save us, save us!'

This was a signal for a chorus of prayers, sobs, and moans from the other carts. My grandfather's assistants were as moved as he was, and certainly would have offered no resistance had some attempt been made to remove the prisoners from their hands. But the people would not move; vain expressions of compassion rose from the thick masses of heads, but nothing more. At one moment the pressure was so great around the carts, that it was impossible to advance. Those who were nearer to the convicts and the executioner were, however, seized with a strange panic. An opening was made, and there was no further pretext for delaying the execution, which duly took place.

On his return home, my grandfather found an order of Fouquier-Tinville's to go to the Palais de Justice, and remain there all night.

The members of the Convention who had been

Digitized by Google

arrested had for some time been detained in the office of the Committee of Public Safety, and from thence they had been taken to prison; Robespierre the elder to the Luxembourg, Saint-Just to the Écossais, Couthon to La Bourbe, Lebas to the house of justice of the department, and Robespierre the younger to La Force. Just as they were leaving the Tuileries, Henriot, the general-in-chief of the National Guards, and his aides-de-camp were brought in.

On the other hand the Commune was not inactive, and was doing its utmost to save Robespierre and struggle with the Convention. It proclaimed insurrection, and sent emissaries to all parts of Paris to call together the National Guard, in order to overthrow the Convention. A part of the artillery of the National Guard took Robespierre's part, and proposed to attack the Tuileries. With their assistance Coffinhal, who was looking for Robespierre, broke into the office of the Committee, found Henriot, and freed him. Henriot mounted a horse and resumed the command of the National Guard; but instead of marching on the Assembly, he galloped off to the Hôtel-de-Ville, there to take the advice of Robespierre, who, on his side, had been freed by his friends. Henriot's want of boldness in this circumstance saved the Convention, the members of which had time to organise their own forces; and while Henriot, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Lebas, Couthon, Robespierre the younger, Payan, and Dumas were losing time in bootless deliberation, Léonard Bourdon, one of the representatives, supported by a large number of National

Digitized by Google

Guards, surrounded the Hôtel-de-Ville, and rushed into the hall where Robespierre and his friends had taken refuge. There still remains considerable doubt as to what then took place. This is the account given by Barrère in his report of the 10th of Thermidor: 'The guilty ones were seized with terror when the sections entered the Hôtel-de-Ville. Lebas blew his brains out, Couthon wounded himself, Robespierre the younger jumped out of a window, Robespierre the elder attempted to commit suicide. Saint-Just was captured, Dumas sought shelter in a garret, Henriot took to flight.' History has distrusted Barrère's official account, for it is in glaring contradiction with the account furnished to the Convention by Léonard Bourdon on the morning of the 10th. He introduced a gendarme who, he said, had killed two of the conspirators with his own hand, and these conspirators he takes care to designate by name: 'We found Robespierre the elder armed with a dagger, which this brave gendarme wrenched from his hand; he *also* struck Couthon, who was also armed.'

Toulongeon, an ex-member of the Constituent Assembly who wrote in 1812, affirms that Robespierre's jaw was broken by a pistol-shot. There is, then, every reason to think that Robespierre did not attempt to commit suicide; M. Louis Blanc shows this very clearly in the notes which follow the seventh chapter of the tenth volume of his 'History of the Revolution.' According to M. Louis Blanc, Médal, the gendarme mentioned by Léonard Bourdon, entered the hall of the Hotel-de-Ville long before the latter; recognising

Digitized by Google

Robespierre, he fired a pistol at him and wounded him.

To M. Louis Blanc's conclusive demonstration I can add an affirmation which, modest as it is, is worth consideration. Médal was one of the judicial gendarmes whom my father saw almost daily. Promoted to the rank of officer Médal left the corps, but the reason of this promotion was a secret to no one; and, at a time when the attempted suicide of Robespierre was accepted by the gravest historians, my father used to tell me of Médal's pistol-shot, the influence it had on the man's promotion, and the anger felt by his comrades—many of whom were rabid partisans of Robespierre—at what they considered a piece of favouritism.

Howbeit, a quarter of an hour after Léonard Bourdon's entrance, the situation was such as Barrère described it. Maximilian Robespierre was lying on the ground, seriously wounded and covered with blood; Robespierre the younger, after taking off his shoes and walking for some time on the broad cornice of the first floor of the Hôtel-de-Ville, had jumped down on the bayonets of the soldiers below. Couthon, slightly wounded, was carried by his friends as far as the quay. Henriot was not better off than his companions; he would not commit suicide, and Coffinhal, indignant at his want of nerve, threw him out of a window into one of the interior courtyards, where he fell on a heap of broken glass. He had strength enough to crawl into a drain where he was found some hours after. Saint-Just, Payan, and Lescot-Fleuriot were arrested.

Digitized by Google

Robespierre the elder was placed on a hand-barrow and carried to the Convention. He was deposited on a large table in one of the rooms of the Committee of Public Safety; and there he remained, from three to eight o'clock A.M., a prey to the sarcasms of those who two days before trembled before him. At last his wounds were dressed and he was taken to the Conciergerie, where Saint-Just, Couthon, Payan, and the others had preceded him.

At five o'clock A.M. the public prosecutor ordered my grandfather to erect the guillotine on the Place de Grève. Charles Henri Sanson had scarcely traversed the court-yard of the Palais when he was recalled and told to wait. A message from the Committee of Public Safety altered the first instructions given to Fouquier; the Place de Grève, which had at first been selected for the execution because of the hatred felt for Robespierre in the neighbouring sections, was abandoned, and the final decision was that Robespierre should be executed on the Place de la Révolution. As some doubts remained as to the disposition of the inhabitants of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, Charles Henri was instructed to remove the scaffold to its new scene by a roundabout route.

He set out with his assistants at six o'clock in the morning; neither he nor his brother, therefore, were present when Robespierre and his companions arrived at the Conciergerie, but he was informed of what took place by the turnkeys. The scaffold was taken down and transferred to the carts. During this operation an im-

Digitized by Google

mense crowd assembled in the Place du Trône. In spite of the Robespierrist tendencies of the Faubourg, no hostile feeling was manifested, but as the carts moved away more than one cried: 'A good journey to you, but don't come back.' A compact mass, in which young people were in a majority, escorted my grandfather and his assistants, and when they reached the Place de la Révolution the escort was so numerous that the gendarmes had great difficulty in clearing the spot where the scaffold was to be erected. This was not done before two o'clock P.M.

My grandfather and father had gone back to the Conciergerie at mid-day. There was as much excitement inside the prison as outside. All the prisoners had been so near death that they could hardly believe their senses. As I previously stated, Robespierre had been brought between eight and nine o'clock; he had been deposited on the bed in which Danton had slept one night. He did not utter a single groan; he only spoke two or three times, and, on account of his wounds, his words were scarcely intelligible. Some linen and water were offered to him; he washed his wounds and tried to sleep, but could not do so. He then rose and asked for ink and paper, but formal orders had been given, and the turnkey refused with the evasiveness of language usual to his profession. Robespierre made a gesture of anger and threat, but he immediately regained his self-possession.

Robespierre the younger, who was badly hurt, was in a neighbouring cell; Couthon was in the head turnkey's room; and Saint-Just occupied a cell which, in remem-

Digitized by Google

brance of the massacre of September, had been called 'the national slaughterhouse.'

The Tribunal was to sit at ten o'clock, but an unexpected difficulty arose. According to the law it was necessary that the identity of the prisoners should be established by two members of the Commune; but as all the members of the Commune were implicated in Robespierre's conspiracy this formality could not be accomplished. Fouquier-Tinville acquainted the Convention with this difficulty; the Assembly suggested that the local committees should send delegates with the object of identifying the accused.

The Tribunal began to sit at half-past twelve. Seillein presided; Fouquier-Tinville, assisted by Liendon, his substitute, was at his usual place. Robespierre the elder was carried in on a hand-barrow; his younger brother was supported by two gendarmes; two other gendarmes carried Couthon in an arm-chair. After being duly identified they were taken back to their cells, and the Tribunal continued to proceed against those who were brought up after the ringleaders.

Liendon, Fouquier's substitute, had ordered that the culprits should be 'prepared' as they left the Tribunal, in order to save time. At two o'clock Charles Henri Sanson, his son, his brother, and two assistants entered Robespierre's cell. He was lying down, his eyes fixed on the window facing his bed. He did not move when they entered, nor did he even look round. My father asked him to get up; his eye was still brilliant and seemed to ask 'Why?' Before an answer was returned

Digitized by Google

he understood, sat up, and stretched out his neck, expressing a desire not to leave his bed ; but, as this could not be done, the assistants lifted him up and placed him on a chair. A large piece of linen which covered his broken jaw was taken off, and while my great-uncle was cutting his hair Charles Henri Sanson held up the bandages. When the operation was finished my grandfather dressed again the wound, and Robespierre acknowledged his kindness by a nod.

Saint-Just was walking up and down his cell when the executioners entered. He was slightly pale, but his eye was bright and proud. He sat down without a word and allowed my grand-uncle to cut his hair. He then held out his hands to Charles Henri before being asked, and as the latter said, 'Not yet,' Saint-Just murmured, ''Tis a pity! I am in a hurry.' These were the only words he uttered, and to the death he retained an air of superb indifference.

Couthon was the only one of the triumvirs who showed discouragement, but his prostration was not due to fear but to sadness.

At four o'clock the Tribunal had identified a sufficiently large number of outlaws. There was another exchange of messages between the judicial authorities and the Committee of Public Safety concerning the convicts who were to be executed on the same day. Twenty-one individuals were selected for immediate punishment. These were: Henriot, late general of the National Guard; Lavalette, late general of the Army of the North ; Dumas, late president of the Revolutionary Tri-

Digitized by Google

bunal; Payan, agent of the Commune; Vivier, one of the judges of the Tribunal and president of the Jacobins; Lescot-Fleuriot, late mayor of Paris; Simon, the cobbler (keeper of the son of Louis XVI.), and ten other municipal officers. Henriot had had an eye pulled out in the scuffle which attended his arrest; he was horrible to behold. Nothing could be more dismal than the *cortége* as it descended the staircase of the Conciergerie; two dying men and a cripple were at the head of it, and a corpse was in the rear. Lebas' body followed Robespierre, as Valazé's corpse had followed the Girondins.

At half-past four the carts appeared on the quay. No crowd ever equalled that which was assembled to see the last of Robespierre. Most historians have related his sinister journey to the scaffold, and I have little information to give beyond what has been already written. The drama was taking place around the executioners rather than with them, in the streets rather than in the carts. Maximilian Robespierre, seated[1] on some straw which one of the assistants had provided for him, was leaning against the side of the cart in which he was; his face was swollen and livid. The fiercest cries, the most vehement exclamations, left him undisturbed; he kept his eyes closed during the whole of the journey. His brother, who had attempted suicide by jumping out of a window, was almost insensible. Couthon appeared astonished at the rage of the multitude, and in his eyes, which were very soft and intelligent, the utmost surprise could be read.

[1] Not *standing*, as M. Michelet asserts that he was, in his *History of the Revolution*, vol. vii. p. 515.

Digitized by Google

When Dumas answered to some passing taunt, 'My only regret is that I did not get all these blackguards guillotined,' Couthon shook his head thoughtfully. Saint-Just was the only one who openly affronted the storm; and he did so without anger, bombast, or weakness. The firmness of his convictions probably elevated his mind above these manifestations. Once only did he look down; a woman near the cart was insulting Robespierre, and charging him with the death of her daughter. Saint-Just smiled bitterly, and he was heard to say, as if speaking to himself: 'Her daughter! Perhaps she would have sold her for twenty livres.'

When the carts reached the house of the Duplay family, where Robespierre used to live, the drivers were obliged to stop. Rings were formed around the carts, and the people danced madly and furiously. A child brought a pail of blood from a neighbouring butcher's, and the door and walls of Robespierre's abode were smeared with it. It was useless for Charles Henri Sanson to order the gendarmes to clear the way; the gendarmes joined the people and a deplorable scene followed. This disgusting manifestation of feeling on the part of the agents of authority had always been allowed since the Queen's execution, and there was no help for it. Robespierre opened his eyes and closed them again when the cart came to a standstill, but this supreme insult left him as unmoved as before.

It was a quarter-past six o'clock when the *cortége* at last reached the Place de la Révolution. The convicts were removed from the carts. Gobeau, ex-substitute of

Digitized by Google

the public prosecutor and member of the Commune, was the first who suffered. Maximilian Robespierre stood leaning against one of the carts, his back turned to the scaffold. His brother was held up by two gendarmes, his wounds not allowing him to stand without support. Couthon was in a chair specially provided for him. When Saint-Just's turn came he embraced the cripple, and in passing before the Robespierres he pronounced the only word of 'Farewell!' His voice betrayed no emotion. Robespierre the elder nodded in answer, turned round, and looked on while his friend was being strapped to the weigh-plank. Robespierre was the tenth to appear on the platform; he went up the steps of the scaffold without any assistance whatever. His demeanour exhibited neither weakness nor assumed bravery; his eye was cold and calm. Charles Henri told one of his men to take off the linen in which the prisoner's face was wrapped; the man did as he was directed and uncovered the broken jaw. The pain must have been horrible, for Robespierre uttered a fearful cry. The blood trickled down from the jaw and the mouth remained wide open. He was immediately strapped down, and, less than a minute after, the knife fell. The head was shown to the crowd, just like Danton's and the King's.

A natural wish to contradict whatever may be of a nature to cast undeserved discredit on my family, induces me here to address an observation to an eminent historian. In his 'History of the Revolution' (p. 265, vol. x.), M. Louis Blanc says: 'When Robespierre was

Digitized by Google

on the platform of the guillotine, the executioner, a rabid royalist, having, by a rough and barbarous movement, torn away the bandage which covered his wounds, the unexpected pain which shot through his face drew a piercing cry from him,' &c. I have no wish to clear my grandfather of the charge of royalism which M. Louis Blanc brings against him, but I cannot allow the charge of cruelty to pass without protest. The energy which Charles Henri Sanson displayed in trying to put a stop to the hideous saturnalia of the Rue Saint-Honoré—and this energy was remarked by many—gives the exact measure of the sanguinary instincts of this *rabid royalist.* In this circumstance, as in that alluded to by M. Louis Blanc, my grandfather forgot his own antipathy only to think of the strict and humane discharge of his duty. Robespierre's wound was covered by a wet piece of linen which was made fast with a *napkin.* Another piece of linen surrounded the forehead and the back of the head. Had my grandfather attempted to execute Robespierre with these bandages, the most serious consequences might have ensued; and I think, speaking from a professional point of view, I have a right to assert that, however sharp was the unfortunate man's pain, it spared him torments far more terrible.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVI.

LESURQUES.

ALTHOUGH it is impossible for me to mention all the instances of capital punishment that occurred in the course of the French Revolution, I cannot pass to another phasis of these Memoirs without dwelling on one of the many criminal cases of the period, which is still, and is likely to remain, one of the most notorious *causes célèbres*. I allude to the Lesurques affair.

At the beginning of the year 4 of the French Republic considerable terror prevailed in the provinces in consequence of the sinister deeds of a large gang of bandits who styled themselves the *Chauffeurs* (literally 'warmers'). Almost every day the news came of the capture of some castle or farm, attended with atrocious scenes in which these formidable malefactors surpassed the cruelty of former judicial tortures. The name of 'Chauffeurs' was but too significant; the gang had chosen the locality of La Beauce for the scene of their operations, and their least cruel crime was murder. These ruffians, with the object of compelling their victims to point out the spot where their property was concealed, had invented an atrocious infliction. They

Digitized by Google

lighted a large fire and brought the feet of the victim in contact with the flames until a confession was extorted. The inhabitants of La Beauce were so terrified that they dared not venture out of their houses even in broad daylight.

Just when outrages of this kind were being perpetrated with the utmost audacity, a report reached Paris to the effect that the mail of Lyons had been waylaid. The courier and the postilion had been found in a lifeless state at a short distance from each other, and the only clue found near the scene of the murder was a deserted horse and cart.

The police immediately set to work. Citizen Daubanton, justice of the peace of the section of the Pont Neuf, was entrusted with the care of discovering the guilty parties. A man of the name of Courriol was arrested at Chateau-Thierry, and he was found in possession of sums and letters which were eventually proved to have been stolen from the mail. Courriol was transferred to Paris, together with one of his friends named Golier, and a third individual named Guesno, who lived in the same house as Courriol. This treble capture, however, threw but little light on the mystery. Courriol alone was seriously compromised ; but nothing could be proved against Golier and Guesno, whose social position and antecedents were above question. Guesno was finally set at liberty. He was returning to the prefecture of police to ask for his passport, when he met one of his compatriots of the name of Lesurques, and forthwith he told him of the unpleasant position in which

Digitized by Google

he had been placed. His story was not finished when they reached the prefecture, and Guesno proposed to Lesurques to come in with him and hear the end of his account while his passport was being looked for.

Scarcely, however, had Lesurques and his companion entered the ante-chamber of M. Daubanton's closet when they became aware that two of the witnesses called on behalf of the prosecution in the Mail affair were looking at them with more than ordinary curiosity. These witnesses, who were women, thought they identified Guesno and Lesurques as two of the supposed murderers, whom they had seen at a short distance from the place where the crime had been committed; and they hastened to intimate the fact to M. Daubanton. This magistrate was much perplexed, for it appeared to him highly improbable that two criminals would thus expose themselves to instant recognition, and rush into the lion's den. Lesurques, especially, had no reason whatever for coming to the prefecture; and as to Guesno, his presence was sufficiently justified. But the evidence of the two women was so positive that he felt it his duty to arrest Lesurques and Guesno.

The two prisoners had great chances of escape, in spite of the affirmations of the women, so long as the case remained in the hands of M. Daubanton; but, for unknown reasons, the affair was sent for investigation to the criminal tribunal of Melun; and the instructing magistrate of this last court, instead of imitating the prudence of his Parisian colleague and trying to dis-

Digitized by Google

cover the truth, applied himself to the collection of proofs of the guilt of the prisoners. A terrible indictment was drawn up against Lesurques and Guesno, who were formally tried, together with Courriol and four other individuals named Laborde, Bruer, Bernard, and Richard. The trial was about to begin when the prisoners formally asked to be tried by the criminal court of Paris, a petition which was granted.

The delayed affair was at last brought up for investigation before the Paris Tribunal on Thermidor 15. The president of the Tribunal, Jérôme Gohier, member of the Legislative Assembly, was a harsh, obstinate man, and throughout the trial he displayed excessive severity and exaggerated zeal. Fifteen witnesses on behalf of the defence proved an *alibi* in favour of Lesurques, eighty-three others spoke highly of his well-known respectability; but their evidence went for nothing in opposition to those who, with singular pertinacity, maintained that Lesurques was one of those who had been seen lurking near the scene of the murder on the night when it was committed. One of the witnesses for the defence, a countryman of Lesurques named Legrand, jeweller of the Palais Royal, said he could corroborate his evidence by an entry of a transaction with Lesurques which, he said, had taken place on the very day of the crime. The book was called for, and it was perceived that an eight had been altered into a nine. At the requisition of the public prosecutor the unfortunate Legrand was immediately arrested on a charge of perjury.

Digitized by Google

This severity but too plainly indicated the result of the trial. The fifteen witnesses who certified an *alibi* were not believed, and the evidence of the two women, together with that of five other doubtful witnesses, was declared conclusive. As for Lesurques he did not for a moment cease to maintain his innocence.

As the jurors were preparing to retire, a woman who had at first been arraigned, Madeleine Bréban, mistress of Courriol, begged the judge's leave to make an important statement. She declared that out of the six prisoners at the bar her lover alone was guilty, and that Guesno and Lesurques were the victims of an extraordinary and fatal resemblance with two of the real murderers named Vidal and Dubosc. The president, whose duty it was to investigate this strange and capital fact, especially after the evidence of Lesurques' witnesses, drily answered that the trial was closed, and that it was too late to take evidence; and the Tribunal, after hearing the verdict of the jury, acquitted Guesno and Bruer, condemned Pierre-Thomas Richard to penal servitude for twenty years and to public exhibition for six hours, and passed sentence of death on Courriol, Lesurques, and David Bernard. On hearing his condemnation, Lesurques, who had been firm and collected throughout the trial, lost his self-possession, and raising his hands to heaven he exclaimed:

'The crime which is imputed to me is indeed atrocious and deserves death; but if it is horrible to murder on the high road it is not less so to abuse the law and convict an innocent man. A day will come

Digitized by Google

when my innocence will be recognised, and then may my blood fall upon the jurors who have so lightly convicted me, and on the judges who have influenced their decision!'

Strange to say, Courriol, the really guilty convict, appeared but slightly preoccupied with his own fate. When he was again in the Conciergerie he thought only of corroborating the declaration of Madeleine Bréban, his mistress, and of saving the life of Bernard, whom he knew to be but slightly guilty, and of Lesurques, whose innocence he was fully aware of. He confirmed his mistress's evidence, and denounced Vidal and Dubosc as the real perpetrators of the crime, adding that Madeleine Bréban, who was free, could assist the judicial authorities in the apprehension of the culprits. Two days after he repeated his declaration, at the same time revealing the names of other accomplices altogether unknown.

Other witnesses asserted that, during the trial, Madeleine Bréban had spoken to them of Lesurques' innocence. One of them said that he had seen the two culprits confounded with Lesurques and Guesno. This resemblance had been increased, as far as the former was concerned, by Dubosc putting on a fair wig, which completed his resemblance to Lesurques. The Tribunal, however, refused to consider these new facts, and the execution was about to take place when the barrister who had defended Lesurques appealed to the Directoire on behalf of his client. Public opinion was strongly in favour of the convict; and this, more than anything else,

Digitized by Google

induced the Directoire to delay the execution. Meanwhile Courriol sent them the following letter:

'Is it, then, true that my crime is to provoke a double murder? The truthful declarations I have constantly made have not saved two innocent men. Can I at least hope that, to avenge their death, you will give express orders for the apprehension of the four individuals I have designated, and who are my only accomplices? The truth will be discovered before long, but before this, the innocent prisoners will perish. The *innocents!* I repeat it, and cannot help repeating to the last minute of my life.'

The Directoire referred the affair to the Conseil des Cinq-cents. A committee was appointed, and Count Siméon was appointed reporter. The choice was ill advised; Count Siméon was more engrossed by the technicalities of the law than moved by a real sense of justice. His long and declamatory report went against the unhappy Lesurques, whose fate was henceforth sealed.

Lesurques heard the fatal news with the stoicism which had not for a single moment forsaken him. He bade farewell to his family, sent a lock of his hair to each of his children, and prepared for death with the coolness of an undisturbed conscience. On the 9th of Brumaire, year 5 (October 30, 1796), my grandfather and father proceeded to the Conciergerie, and found the convicts in the hall, through which so many had passed during the Reign of Terror. David Bernard was in a state of utter prostration; Courriol, on the contrary, was excited. As

Digitized by Google

to Lesurques, he was as calm and fearless as ever. When he saw my grandfather, whose white hair sufficiently designated him as the chief executioner, he stepped up to him, and said, holding out a sealed letter:

'Citizen, I hope for the honour of human justice that your functions do not often compel you to shed the blood of a guiltless man; I hope, therefore, that you will grant the last request of a man who is about to suffer for what he has not done. Be good enough to keep this letter, which may hereafter contribute to the restoration of the honour of my wife and poor children, whereof they have been so unjustly deprived.'

While one of his assistants was cutting the unfortunate man's hair, my grandfather read the paper Lesurques had just given him. It was a letter addressed to Dubosc, the man in whose place he was condemned. It ran as follows:

'*To Citizen Dubosc.*

'Citizen Dubosc,—I do not even know you, and I am going to suffer the death which was reserved for you. Be satisfied with the sacrifice of my life. Should you ever be brought to account, remember my three children and their mother, who are disgraced for ever, and do not prolong their agony. Confess that you are the man.'

After reading the letter my grandfather approached Lesurques and assured him that he would send a copy of it to all the papers. I need hardly add that Charles Henri kept his word.

Digitized by Google

All preparations were now concluded. Lesurques, of his own choice, was dressed in spotless white, symbol of his innocence. He was the first to take his place in the cart; Courriol followed him, and Bernard, who had fainted, was deposited on the straw. Then began the most dismal and extraordinary journey that ever was made from the Conciergerie to the Place de Grève. Lesurques and Courriol stood in front. At every turn of the wheel, Courriol exclaimed in a piercing voice:

'I am guilty! Lesurques is innocent!'

And for twenty minutes, that is during the whole way to the guillotine, he perseveringly repeated his awful protest against justice. The crowd was horrified, and there were few who did not believe the murderer who confessed his crime, but who proclaimed his companion's innocence. Courriol again repeated his words at the foot of the scaffold with extraordinary energy and vehemence, and the thump of the knife but just covered his supreme shriek:

'Lesurques is innocent!'

Lesurques did not utter a word. He looked at Courriol with a touching expression of gratitude, and when his turn came he advanced firmly, saying:

'May God forgive my judges as I forgive them!'

The rehabilitation which the unfortunate Lesurques hoped for is yet to come. It was in vain that his family sought it with the most noble and interesting constancy; vainly have journalists, writers, and public opinion generally supported their efforts. The judicial authorities have perseveringly refused to recognise this flagrant

Digitized by Google

miscarriage of justice.[1] And yet the innocence of Lesurques was amply demonstrated a short time after his execution: all the real murderers of the courier of Lyons designated by Courriol were captured; Dubosc himself, whose fatal resemblance to Lesurques was the cause of the latter's death, was taken and tried. Dubosc was a ruffian of the worst kind. He denied the crime, doubtless in the hope of saving his life; but his protestations were of no avail; he was executed just four years after Lesurques. Two years later, another murderer designated by Courriol was taken and executed; his name was Roussy. Before his death he made a full confession and entirely cleared Lesurques, who had no acquaintance whatever with any of the murderers of the courier of Lyons.

Meanwhile the family of Lesurques were in the horrors of want and despair—their property was confiscated, his wife and mother became mad. The latter died in a lunatic asylum; the former only recovered her senses some years after. Five-and-twenty years elapsed before any notice of the 'affaire Lesurques' was taken by the State; it was only under the Restoration that the indefatigable champions of the Lesurques family obtained a revision of the sentence as far as material interests were concerned. The Minister of Finances at last recognised that the confiscation of Lesurques' property was illegal, and this property was duly restored to the children. But with this the descendants of

[1] It is only two years since the grand-children of Lesurques made another ineffectual attempt to obtain the revision of his trial.—ED. N.

Digitized by Google

Lesurques were not satisfied. With a perseverance which can only be compared to that shown by the family of Lally-Tollendal, they have appealed to justice under every successive Government; but, less fortunate than the son of the governor of French India, they are still waiting for justice, and the French courts have not seen the last of them yet.

I have now exhausted the documents and notes left by my ancestors, and particularly by my grandfather and father. There is a gap in the information of the latter; it may appear a serious one since it extends over nearly fifteen years, but the omission, for which, of course, I am in no way responsible, is more apparent than real. Executions were not very frequent under the Consulate and the Empire, and I cannot conscientiously draw upon my imagination by putting together the fragmentary information gathered from conversation with my father on the executions of Fouquier-Tinville, Carrain, Babœuf, Cadoudal, &c. My task is now wholly personal: I have to relate my own impressions and what I have seen. The impressions of an executioner may seem to the reader almost as interesting as the events he has to chronicle; this may be my excuse for dilating upon my education, and the circumstances which unavoidably led me to embrace a profession which, although it had been that of nine generations of my ancestors, was none the less contrary to my tastes and aspirations.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY VOCATION.

I WAS born in 1799. My father's first intention was not that I should take to the guillotine. My grandmother as well as my mother were strongly opposed to the extension of the office to me. My grandfather was the only member of the family who differed from this view; and although I forgive him with all my heart, I am bound to state that it was owing to him that I appeared on the guillotine.

The old man, who had led as stormy a life as it was possible for a man of his profession to lead, laboured under the belief that an executioner, no more than a king, could abdicate. He had remained at his post while everything around him was sinking; all human powers had passed under his knife—royalty, genius, eloquence, virtue, patriotism; and a dark and morose humour had taken possession of the old man.

As far as my recollection extends, I remember that he was very fond of gardening. He used to walk every morning over his well-sanded garden, watering his flowers, and engrossing himself in the only occupation which gave him pleasure. I can still see him with his three-

Digitized by Google

cornered hat, his knee-breeches, and thin-bladed sword; he used to stop before the flowers he had reared himself, and he looked at them with something like tenderness. One day I remember that he exclaimed before a number of tulips of the finest red:

'How fresh, how red they are! If they saw them they would say that I water them with blood!'

Young as I was, these words struck me. Some days before I had heard an absurd vampire story which had left a deep impression on my mind. Somehow or other, the two ideas got together in my head, and in the evening I could not help asking my mother, as I was going to bed:

'Mamma, grandfather says he waters his flowers with blood; is it because he is a vampire?'

My mother started. 'Be quiet, Henri, be quiet,' she said; 'who told you those nasty things?'

I then related to her the vampire story, and what I had heard in the garden. She made me promise not to say anything more about it. The circumstance passed away from my mind for a time. I was reminded of it later, and then I understood what my grandfather meant.

Our position was more than prosperous; in spite of the losses we had incurred under the Monarchy through the wretched state of the finances, our fortune was considerable. Chirurgery had always been a very productive resource for our family. It is worth remarking that after the suppression of the right of *havage*, alluded to in the first part of this record, up to the establishment

Digitized by Google

in France of a regular administration, our salary was often nominal, for it was frequently left unpaid. It was only after the Revolution that we regularly received the remuneration attached to our office. It was mainly on their personal fortune that my ancestors subsisted. Howbeit the property which eventually came down to my hands was more than sufficient to guarantee my independence, and enable me not to have recourse to the guillotine to earn my bread. My family could then hope to see me forsake the traditional office without apprehension for my prospects. If my father, whose timid and good-natured disposition was altogether unfitted for his profession, had been unable to shirk it, it was in consequence of certain circumstances which could in no way affect me. As I said before, and as the reader may have seen, my grandfather had curious notions, before the Revolution, on the legitimacy of his office, and he had brought up his son in the idea that he should take his place after his death. Obedience was always the first of virtues in our family, and my father had obeyed his father, but not, however, without internal struggles; for I remember hearing my great-uncle, Charlemagne Sanson, say that more than once he had felt pity for his manifest distress in the executions which they both witnessed. Having submitted to his father's will, he however intended to educate me after his own fashion. He was deceived in his surmise, and I will presently explain how.

I had just completed my seventh year when my grandfather died. He was very old, and his last

Digitized by Google

moments were peaceful and free from suffering. Half an hour before his death he called my father to his bedside.

'Henri,' he said to him, 'I am going away, and I have to say to you a few parting words before I die. I am aware that you never liked your profession; I think, however, that I leave you a good example. Believe me, let us abide by the station which fate awarded to us. It is of no use to hope that the world will ever receive you: your origin can neither be forgotten nor forgiven. Do not take another occupation for yourself or your son. It would be a desertion from your duty. There has not been a single instance in our family of such desertion. Our family is certainly the most ancient and important in the profession; but others have done as we have done. For a long time I sincerely believed that we were very useful to society, and that in no profession were self-denial and devotion shown more than in ours, but I have seen such singular events that my opinions are slightly altered now. Some day we may be suppressed, just as many other things have been suppressed. Until then be certain that no one has a right to blame or insult you. You are not responsible for the blood you shed. Do not forget that the judge who passes sentence is more responsible than you are.'

The old man's strange legacy sealed my destiny.

I had then no notion of what all this meant. But a few days after my grandfather's death, I heard a conversation between my father and my mother, the words of which return to my memory, so much do they remind me of my sacrificed existence.

Digitized by Google

'Julia,' said my father, 'my father was right. It's of no use to try and get out of the groove. Henri would always be reminded of his origin by his more fortunate companions and friends, and he would be more unhappy in society than out of it. I don't want my son to blush for his father. Let him get as good an education as money can procure, but let him remain the son of Messieurs de Paris, and be true to his origin.'

My mother made some objections, but these my father firmly resisted.

'What profession could he possibly adopt? Everybody would spurn him. There is no law to prevent his entering some liberal profession; but the laws of society are more pitiless than those of the State. Were he a barrister, no one would ever consent to appeal to the services of an executioner's son, and it would be the same in every other direction. Believe me, we are providing for the best, and he will thank us afterwards for not making a "gentleman" of him.'

Had I been a little older when I heard this, I have no doubt that my impression would have been far deeper than it was. It was the first indistinct intuition I had of the future which was reserved for me.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MY EDUCATION.

APART from the domestic loss I have related in the preceding chapter, my childhood was happy and peaceful. My grandmother outlived her husband, and she shared with my mother the management of the house. Our life was retired, but quiet and pleasant. A very limited number of friends came to see us on Sundays, but their number grew thinner every day.

I must ask leave not to mention my mother's maiden name. She belonged to a family that was not of our profession, and the members of this family might be displeased if I revealed their relationship to me. Even my grandchildren might thereby discover their origin, for they know neither my name nor what I have been. I had a son, but he died; and the name of Sanson shall therefore die with me. Such are the cruel consequences of the reprobation which attaches to our functions, and which haunts us even in our retreat after we have been fortunate enough to shake off the yoke. The *bravi* of the Republic of Venice constantly wore masks, and thus concealed their identity. This advantage is denied us.

My mother gave me my first education. I was then

Digitized by Google

handed over to the care of an old abbé who continued my mother's task. My instructor was kind, considerate, and clever; and his death I considered as a great misfortune. The old man's demise caused much perplexity to my parents. They were fully aware of the necessity of not interrupting my studies; but, on the other hand, they hesitated very much about sending me to school, where, should my origin be discovered, I could not but be despised and cold-shouldered by my schoolfellows. I may add that my father's profession was not yet known to me; and although it was intended that I should follow the same calling, the secret had hitherto been kept back from me. It was to my mother that I was indebted for the continuation of my education. My father had just sold the old farm of Brie-Comte-Robert; my mother persuaded him to buy a country-house in the neighbourhood of Paris, and close to one of the rural colleges that are so numerous in the suburbs of the capital. Brunoy was at last selected. My father bought there a pretty villa, and the purchase was made under the name of M. de Longval. It was under the first name of my ancestors that I went to school.

The time I spent at Brunoy was the most pleasant period of my life. I liked school, and my schoolfellows liked me. But this happy existence was not of long duration; winter obliged my family to return to Paris. I had just completed my twelfth year. My studies were rather advanced; I had been taught music and drawing, for which I had a natural taste; and my father, knowing how pernicious is the interruption of

Digitized by Google

studies at a critical age, resolved to send me to school in Paris *under my real name.* Near our house was a large 'Institution' which followed the classes of the Lycée Charlemagne. My father called on M. Michel, the head master, and asked him if he would admit me to his school. M. Michel was somewhat taken aback, but after a moment of reflection he resolutely accepted, observing, however, that it was preferable that I should conceal my origin from my companions.

I then became a pupil of the Institution Michel. My life was pretty nearly what it had been at Brunoy. Every day we went to the Lycée under the superintendence of a crusty usher, and the remainder of our time was devoted to preparation. I was a day-boy, and I therefore enjoyed the privileges of home life. On Sundays we used to go to Brunoy, a place which I also saw with pleasure.

At Brunoy I had formed none of those juvenile friendships which are so common at school. It was otherwise at the Institution Michel. I became very friendly with two or three schoolfellows of mine, and especially with T——, whose parents, like mine, lived in the Faubourg Saint-Denis. He was also a day-boy. We used to leave school together in the evening, and we swore eternal friendship to each other. T—— was stronger than I was; he often protected me against bullies, and I never lost an opportunity of showing him my gratitude. We were then the best friends in the world, the Damon and Pythias of the Institution Michel. On our way home in the evening I used to leave T—— at his door,

Digitized by Google

and then I proceeded to our house in the Rue Neuve Saint-Jean. One evening, having left school earlier than usual, T—— had the evil inspiration to accompany me home. I accepted with much pleasure, and insisted that he should come in and see my family. But when my father and mother saw us, I was extremely surprised and vexed on noticing the coldness with which they greeted my friend. Although dinner was served they did not ask him to sit down, and poor T—— went away, no doubt wondering at the strangeness of this reception.

On the following day I went to school, still pondering on this event. I was not surprised, after what had occurred, to find T—— far more reserved with me than was his wont. Whenever I went up to him he tried to avoid me, and hardly answered my questions. This demeanour towards me did not pass away, as I hoped it would; T—— persisted in avoiding my company, and I was so vexed that I avoided him too, and tried to make other friends. But strange to say, all my other companions behaved with me in the same way.

I was much pained at this unexplainable revulsion of feeling. I bore it for a few days, but at last I could hold out no longer. One morning I was waiting with T—— for our drawing-master; I asked my late friend to explain his behaviour. 'You are cruel, T——,' said I to him; 'not only have you deprived me of your friendship, but you have spoken against me to our schoolfellows. I don't know what you told them, but there's not one of them who doesn't shun my company.'

Digitized by Google

T—— looked at me intently, as if trying to guess my real thoughts; he shrugged his shoulders and began drawing something on one of the pieces of paper lying on the table.

'Now, I don't intend to stand this,' I resumed, angry at his silence; 'you must explain. I don't want to be shunned and despised by my schoolfellows any longer. Is it because my father did not receive you well when you came to see us? I was sorrier than you were. But after all it was not my fault.'

T—— looked at me again, and then went on drawing.

'Will you speak, I ask again?' cried I, angrily.

Instead of answering he held out to me the drawing he had just finished. It was a kind of estrade, surmounted by two beams, at the top of which was a large knife. A man was strapped to a plank between the two beams, and another man stood by holding a rope. It was a guillotine, with the sufferer and the executioner. Under this terrible drawing T—— had written in large letters:

TUUS PATER CARNIFEX.

I had never seen the instrument of death, but the words explained the whole thing to me. I knew what *carnifex* meant. I uttered a shriek and ran away, still holding the paper which had just revealed to me the misfortune of my birth. I ran out of school and did not stop until I was before our door. I rang violently, rushed towards my mother, who had witnessed my

Digitized by Google

entrance, and fell fainting at her feet. The whole house was in an uproar. My father was out, and when he returned he asked me the cause of my agitation. I told him of what had occurred, and produced T——'s drawing. He doubtless thought that the time had come for an explanation, for he asked my mother and grandmother to leave us alone. He then told me what and who he was; he acquainted me with the history of our family, with the reasons that had induced fathers and sons to follow the same repulsive profession. He also told me of my grandfather's dying wish, and took advantage of what had occurred at school to show that I was bound to follow in his steps and those of my ancestors. I passed with him one of the most painful hours of my life; but I was young and submissive; his reasons were well put and forcible; I had no alternative but to submit, and I submitted. The fact that so many members of my family had been executioners impressed me more than anything else; it seemed to me that to discard them was impossible, that my destiny was traced in advance; and I accepted it with grief but with resignation.

On the following day my father received the visit of M. Michel, who had questioned T—— and discovered the reason of my disappearance. The worthy schoolmaster assured my father that he would prevent the recurrence of such a mishap as had occurred to me; that he had scolded T——, and threatened with instant expulsion whoever followed his example. My father asked me if I wished to return to school. I replied

Digitized by Google

that I did not, as the instruction I had already acquired was more than sufficient for the duties reserved for me. I nevertheless thanked M. Michel for his kindness. My father made no objection, and henceforth I enjoyed the fullest liberty.

I occupied myself with perhaps more wisdom than boys of my age usually do. I remained in the morning with my mother and grandmother. With the latter only did I dare to speak of my future career; with my mother I never thought of alluding to the subject. As to my father, I seldom saw him alone. I went out in the afternoon either to loaf about or to attend the lectures of well-known professors of the Sorbonne. It was thus that I took the habit—which I have retained to this day—of long walks. Since my adventure with T—— I thought everybody in the street recognised me. This led me to enter and leave our house stealthily, enveloped in a large cloak, and looking around uneasily. It was thus that after being gay and expansive I became dark and taciturn.

I returned home at dinner time, and no one ever thought of asking me where I had been and what I had been about. Up to the time when I acquired a strong liking for the drama, I used to spend my evenings in our drawing-room with my parents and the few friends who occasionally came to see us. None of our assistants were ever received there; the assistants lived in a separate part of the house.

We had a large library composed of rare books and MSS. I found there the treasures of ancient and

Digitized by Google

modern literature, and read them with avidity. It was thus that I became familiar with the works of Beccaria, Filangieri, Montesquieu, and Joseph de Maistre. A work which especially impressed me was the 'Soirées de Saint Pétersbourg' by the last named writer. Although I instinctively protested against the doctrine expounded by the author of the necessity of the effusion of human blood, the paradox impressed me. If capital punishment is justifiable, I used to argue, the most important functionary of social order should be the executioner. But, by a singular contrast, the more I became reconciled with the executioner the more I loathed capital punishment. I felt violent propensities of rebellion against society, whose prejudices soil with mud the basis of its edifice; and fits of indignation against the law by which society transgresses the rights of the Divinity. I erected a pedestal for the executioner, and I abominated execution. My life has been spent in such mental struggles.

My grandmother was the usual recipient of my impressions. I liked to converse with her on a subject which held so important a place in my meditations. She spoke on the subject with a freedom which enabled me to examine her arguments with more coolness than I could otherwise have shown. The temerity of her arguments was arrested by no feminine sensitiveness. Strangely enough, grandmothers in our family had the greatest influence over the destiny of grandsons, and the wife of Charles Henri Sanson was as much responsible for the perpetuation of our office as Martha Dubut

Digitized by Google

herself. She was clever, insinuating, and free-spoken; and she gained over me an ascendency which neither my father nor my mother possessed. She made me familiar with every paradox calculated to drive away my instinctive horror for my future profession.

I said, I believe, that I acquired a taste for the theatre. The tragedy was then in favour. Talma, Mdlle. Georges, and Mdlle. Duchesnois formed such a trio as has rarely been equalled. My liking for the play increased so that I went there almost every night. There was then a rivalry between Mdlle. Duchesnois and Mdlle. Georges; I became one of the ardent partisans of the latter. Mérope and Sémiramis enchanted me when they appeared before me under the features of Georges. Unfortunately the literature of the time was not at the height of such artists as Talma, Georges, Duchesnois, and Mars. On my return home I was only too glad to confide my impressions to my mother. We even talked of the theatre at table, and my father often joined in the conversation. I was surprised to find that he was as well acquainted with the daily occurrences of the stage as I was. Once I could not help saying:

'Father, I am sure you go to the theatre yourself.'

'Why shouldn't I, Henri?' he answered, smiling. 'I am not so religious as these ladies,' he added, pointing to my mother and grandmother, who never went to the play.

'Why shouldn't we go together?' I exclaimed; 'we should enjoy ourselves far more.'

My father turned grave, and said:

Digitized by Google

'No, Henri; we had better go separately. This does not prevent us from talking about plays, but I had rather you should go alone, and not be seen in my company.'

I was much moved. It was obvious that my father was afraid of casting odium upon me before my time. His prudence was extreme; we never went out together. Whenever we were compelled to go in each other's company he ordered his carriage, and no one could see us behind the blinds.

This quiet existence was interrupted by a sad event. On October 24, 1817, one of the chambermaids found my grandmother dead in her bed. She was in her eighty-fourth year. My father was much grieved at this loss. I also grieved over the loss of my grandmother, whom I had learnt to love. During mourning time I was of course obliged to give up the amusements I used to indulge in. This gave me a pretext for carrying out a plan I had made a long time before. My readings had inspired me with a wish to see Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Holland. My mother did not encourage me, as she was loath to separate from me, but my father readily gave his consent. 'You are quite right, Henri,' he said; 'nothing instructs so much as travelling. Go, and a pleasant journey to you!'

I left Paris two days after. Means of locomotion were, of course, far more primitive then than they are now. However, I successively visited in a comparatively short time Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Holland. I saw Rome, Naples, and Venice, and I was immensely

Digitized by Google

impressed by the artistic and natural beauties which passed before me. I did not remain long in Switzerland, but I remained for nearly six months on the banks of the Rhine. What struck me the most during the whole of my voyage was, I must confess, Amsterdam. My roving life was charming; and I was quite taken aback when I found that it had lasted over a year. It was with regret that, out of deference to my mother's wish, I turned again homeward and made for Paris.

The reader may perhaps be astonished at the easy and almost brilliant fashion of living of a family of executioners; but then it should not be forgotten that my father's fortune, not to speak of his emoluments, amounted to nearly 20,000*l.*, and that I was his only child.

A year after my return, I remarked, in the restricted circle of our acquaintances, a young girl, whose eyes were often fixed upon me with a singular expression. I fancied she talked about me to my mother; and mere curiosity at first induced me to remain at home more frequently than was my wont. The young person used to come with her family; I made her acquaintance, and I soon perceived that I was in love with her. This passion developed itself so rapidly, that I spoke about it to the young lady, and asked her permission to seek her hand—a permission which was duly given. I had the courage to acquaint her with the eventualities of the future. I frankly explained my position, and did not conceal from her the obligation under which I laboured of being my father's successor. One can imagine my agreeable surprise when I heard her approve of my in-

Digitized by Google

tentions, and encourage me to persevere in them. So much courage and, I may say, love on the part of so young a girl increased my affection for her, and I resolved to marry her as soon as possible.

On the following day I went to my father's closet, and asked the favour of a conversation. He was rather surprised, for I had hitherto shunned solemn parleys with him. 'Father,' I began, 'I am the bearer of good news. I know that in spite of your desire to see me follow in your steps, you would not for a moment compel me to do so. I have thought the matter over for the last two years, and I have now to express my resolve to select no other profession than yours.'

My father did not reply, but I saw that he was deeply moved. He took me in his arms and embraced me.

'And now,' I continued, 'I have to speak of something else. You told me once that whenever I should feel inclined to marry you would not interfere with my wish. I love Miss ——, and she has been good enough to say that my affection is reciprocated. I came to request you, father, to ask her hand in my name.'

At this my father expressed great satisfaction. Not only did he promise to do as I wished, but he said that previously he and my mother hoped that a match might eventually be arranged, and he was very glad to find that their wishes were fulfilled.

On the evening of the same day my father discharged his promise. Miss ——'s father slightly hesitated on account of our extreme youth (our ages, put

Digitized by Google

together, but just amounted to five-and-thirty years), but we had no difficulty in overcoming his scruples.

A month after, our marriage was celebrated at Saint-Laurent Church; and my young wife and I took possession of a cosy apartment in my father's house, which my mother had furnished and prepared for us.

The recollections of my youth end here. They conclude, like novels, by a marriage. It is no fault of mine if my story is not as stirring as fiction. It has at least the advantage of being true.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XLIX.

MY FIRST EXECUTION.

THE first year of my marriage was calm and peaceable. I had every reason to be happy. Thanks to the cares of my good mother, we had very little to think of beyond our pleasures and comforts. My young wife was as cheerful and kind as she was pretty, and our union promised to be one of undisturbed harmony.

My father made no allusion to my promise to take his office; but that promise was constantly in my mind; it was the only thought that clouded my happiness. Sometimes I looked with sadness at my young partner, thinking that a time should come for her to assume in her turn the title of Madame de Paris. The fulfilment of my pledge was even nearer at hand than I expected. My father was taken ill in the middle of the winter of 1819, and he was laid up for two months. His constant preoccupation during his illness was a sentence of death passed by the assize court of the Seine on a soldier of the Royal Guard, Pierre Charles Rodolphe Foulard, who had murdered two unfortunate women, to steal a watch and a pair of earrings. Foulard was barely twenty years

Digitized by Google

of age, but his crime was so atrocious that there was no hope of a reprieve for him. Foulard's case, however, had still to pass before the Court of Revision; but my father felt that his health would not permit him to superintend the execution. He was thinking of appealing to one of his provincial colleagues. This was rather awkward, as it was well known that I was to be my father's successor, and the judicial authorities might well inquire why I did not act as his substitute. Since my marriage I had made a point of following my father in the few executions that had occurred, but I had taken no active part in them. I may add that my father's part was hardly more active than mine; he had said the truth when he told me that almost everything was done by the assistants, and that the executioner only superintended what his servants did.

The time came for Foulard's execution; it came sooner than my father expected, so that he was unable to secure some one else's services. He was much better, but certainly not well enough to resume his duties; and my conscience smote me when he expressed his determination to risk his health, perhaps his life, and execute Foulard. I said to myself that, since I must begin, I had better begin at once, and I proposed to my father to take his place.

He gladly acquiesced, and gave me all the necessary instructions; he also pointed out two assistants on whose zeal I could especially rely; and finally I was assured that my attendance at the execution was little more than a formality. The assistants entered my father's

Digitized by Google

room just as I was leaving it, and he made them a short speech in which he urged them to afford me their best help and protection.

I was very nervous and frightened; nevertheless, I strictly acted upon the instructions furnished to me, and I gave the necessary directions to the carpenters. As night came on, my discomfort increased. I could scarcely eat any dinner. Fortunately my father was in his room, otherwise he might have insisted on doing the work himself. My mother and my wife were as uneasy as I was, but they abstained from making any observation on the matter. After dinner I retired to my room, and passed one of the worst nights of my life. When I got up next morning I was feverish and tired. The assistants were waiting for me in the courtyard. My father had ordered out his carriage for me, and with my new servants I silently proceeded to the Conciergerie. The horses went slowly enough, yet the journey seemed to me fearfully short.

It was yet dark when we entered that dismal prison. My assistants followed me at a short distance. I thought I saw an expression of disdain on the faces of the turnkeys and prison officials. I was in no humour to brook the contempt of men whose position, after all, did not much differ from mine. I assumed a sharp and imperative tone calculated to make them understand that I was not to be imposed upon, and ordered the head gaoler to hand us over the culprit. He led us into a low-ceilinged hall, where Foulard shortly after appeared, accompanied by the worthy Abbé Montés, a priest whose friendship I

Digitized by Google

afterwards acquired. Foulard's consternation struck me. The unfortunate boy was under age; had his father left him the smallest sum of money he could not have touched it; nevertheless he was considered responsible. This appeared to me iniquitous, the more so as I was only a year older than he. Foulard was a tall and handsome fellow, and his face betrayed no signs of the perversity he had shown in the perpetration of his horrible deed.

Fauconnier, my chief assistant, saw I was flurried; he came forward and told Foulard to sit down. When the young man's hair was cut, we got into the cart: the Abbé Montés and Foulard were behind us, and I stood in front with my two assistants.[1] The almoner of the Conciergerie doubtless perceived that I required encouragement and support as well as the man whose life I was going to take, for he spoke to me with much kindness: 'I see, sir, that you are now attending to your father's duties. Such missions as yours demand no small amount of courage. We are invested with duties which in some degree are akin: you represent the justice of men, I represent the mercy of God. You may be assured of my good disposition towards you, and of my readiness to assist you whenever it is in my power.'

I could not find a single word to answer, although I felt intensely grateful to the Abbé Montés for his kindness. Foulard was taciturn, but when we reached the

[1] Until then my father and grandfather had occupied a back seat beside the priest, and assigned a front place to the culprit. I was the first to alter this custom. My object was to leave the culprit with his last friend, the priest. I hope this does not appear childish. I acted with the best intention, and I believe I acted rightly.

Digitized by Google

quay he became very excited, and cried out in a loud voice:

'Fathers and mothers! behold the consequences of neglect of one's children! I am guilty, but my parents are responsible for my crime, for they gave me neither advice nor education.'

We reached the Place de Grève. The guillotine raised her two red arms, and the pale rays of a winter sun were reflected by the polished steel of the knife. A great many people were looking on. Foulard embraced the priest, and looked round before ascending the steps. In the first rank of the soldiers who surrounded the guillotine he saw a sergeant of his company. 'Come to me, my old comrade,' he cried to him, 'and let me bid you farewell.' The old soldier did not hesitate; he came forward and embraced the dying man. Foulard was very excited. He suddenly turned to me: 'Let me embrace you too,' he said, 'if only to show that I forgive everybody.' This, I confess, gave me a fearful blow. I stepped back. I really think that if the unfortunate man had embraced me I could not have given the signal for his death.

But even in this I am mistaken; this signal I did not give. My assistants saw my movement of retreat and understood the peril. They pushed Foulard up the steps. In less time than I take to write it he was strapped down and his head fell. I looked stupidly at the bloody scene. I saw one of the assistants pushing the headless trunk into a basket, while another was sponging the blood which had spurted on the scaffold.

Digitized by Google

I was seized with irresistible terror, and I ran away as fast as my legs could carry me. I wandered about town hardly knowing what I was about. I thought people were following and hooting me. It was only when I found myself at Neuilly that I recovered, and even then my conscience smote me bitterly. At last I made up my mind. I had crossed the line, there was no help for it; I had, as it were, passed my examination of executioner, and I could not return on my steps. I went home subdued, if not comforted, and I found some relief in the thought that the first step was made, and the first bitterness had passed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER L.

LOUVEL.

IT is erroneous to say that the first step is everything, but it is certainly that which is the most trying. I never got rid of my natural disgust for my profession, but my emotions were far less intense after my first execution. From that time I regularly replaced my father, or I accompanied him whenever he appeared on the scaffold. In the course of the same year (1819) we had to go twice to Beauvais; the first time for the execution of a parricide named Moroy, the second time for that of a murderer called Liebe.

On May 13 of the following year the guillotine was again erected on the Place de Grève for a young man of twenty-two, Charles Normand, condemned to death for having murdered Captain Sion, his master.

Few people were seen on the Grève on the day of execution. Paris, the whole of France, were engrossed by another drama, of which the *dénoûement* was also to come off on the Place de Grève. Three months before, the heir of the elder branch of the Bourbon family, the Duke de Berri, had been murdered. The assassin was

Digitized by Google

arrested immediately; he said his name was Pierre Louvel, he was a saddler by trade. Louvel confessed that his object in murdering the last scion of an illustrious family was political; he wanted, he said, to extinguish the race of the Bourbons for ever. Fate went against him, for six months after the Duchess de Berri was delivered of a child who was to be the Comte de Chambord.

Louvel was an enthusiastic republican. His life was pure and honest, but he was a fanatic, and for several years he brooded over his intended crime. It was soon discovered that he had no accomplices, and his trial was proceeded with. Louvel received with haughtiness his advocates, MM. Archambault and Bonnet; he requested them to say nothing that might be in contradiction with his previous declarations. He had committed his crime alone, he said, and he had been prompted by patriotism. He felt no regret; he even intended, had he escaped, to murder the other members of the royal family. 'I might, perhaps, have spared the King,' he added, 'because he was the only member of the family who had not fought against France.'

The trial began on June 5, before the House of Peers. It only lasted two days. Several peers, MM. Desize, De Lally-Tollendal, and De Montmorency, questioned Louvel closely, but no other facts than those he had already given were elicited. The issue of the trial could not be doubtful; before sentence was passed, however, Louvel rose and read the following statement:

'I have now to answer for a crime which I com-

Digitized by Google

mitted unaided. In dying I am consoled by the thought that I have dishonoured neither my country nor my family. I can only be regarded as a Frenchman resolved to sacrifice himself in order to destroy, according to my system, a number of the men who took up arms against his country. But among the men who compose the Government there are some as guilty as I am; they have described crimes as virtues. The worst governments in France have always punished traitors, and in striking the Duke de Berri I was discharging a sacred duty.

'According to my system, when the country is threatened from the outside, political parties should forget party-feeling and join hands against the common enemy. Those who do not act thus are guilty. In my opinion, if the Battle of Waterloo was so fatal to France, it was because Brussels and Ghent were full of Frenchmen who fomented treason in the ranks of our army.

'In my opinion, the death of Louis XVI. was necessary, because he betrayed, or wanted to betray, France into the hands of the enemy. The Bourbons are eternally tainted with treason, and they have no right to reign in France; they deserve punishment, and I have been one of the instruments of national justice.'

After this declaration Louvel was taken back to the Conciergerie, and the House deliberated. Sentence of death was unanimously pronounced, and the clerk of the House was sent to communicate the sentence to Louvel. He received the news unabashed. 'So much the better,'

Digitized by Google

he said; 'I am very glad to die. A reprieve would cause me more pain than death itself.' He sternly refused the assistance of religion. 'I don't want to go to paradise,' said he, laughing; 'I might meet there the Duke d'Enghien, who fought against his country, and I could never agree with him.' The Abbé Montés, however, obtained admittance to his cell and endeavoured to soften his heart.[1]

As to us, last actors of all these dismal dramas, we received on June 6, in the evening, an order to take the culprit on the following morning and to behead him on the Place de Grève. In deference to this order, my father and I went to the Conciergerie on the 7th, accompanied by four assistants. We found there a second order, which deferred the execution until half-past five o'clock P.M. We therefore waited until that time, wondering at the cause of this delay. The scaffold had been, of course, erected on the Grève, and an immense crowd gathered around it.

At half-past five we went to Louvel's cell, but my father suddenly remarked that no clerk was present, and another quarter of an hour was lost in fetching one. At a quarter to six exactly we 'took possession' of Louvel; one of the assistants tied his hands, while another was

[1] Culprits—religious culprits, of course—have no doubt derived benefit and consolation from the advice of the Roman Catholic priest who invariably attended them to execution. But it may have been seen in the course of the above Memoirs that spiritual advisers forced their exhortations upon convicts of all kinds, whether religious or not, thereby adding another torment to that of impending death. This merciless tender of consolation to men who persistently refuse to hear it cannot but appear as cruel as it is disgusting.—N. Ed.

Digitized by Google

cutting his hair and the collar of his shirt. Louvel, who was thirty-six years of age, was a middle-sized man; his forehead was high and bumpy, and his eyes were deep-set and fierce. His face, on the whole, was anything but prepossessing. When the 'toilette' was complete, he asked for his hat, alleging his baldness. We then started for the Grève. I cannot say why, but I had an idea that the execution would not take place; I thought that the royal family would take into consideration the dying wish of the Duke de Berri, who had asked for Louvel's pardon. Moreover, I always felt prompted to put off the hour of death, in order to give the victim every possible chance of escape. Louvel's only hope of salvation in the present circumstance, was to pretend that he had revelations to make; and I said to my father, loud enough for Louvel to hear:

'If he has accomplices he should say so now, as it is the only means of putting off the execution.'

The Abbé Montés heard this, and turning to the culprit:

'You hear, my friend,' said he; 'you had better speak out while there is time yet.'

Louvel drily replied: 'I have nothing to say.'

We reached the guillotine, and the culprit was about to ascend to the platform, when the Abbé Montés caught hold of his arm, and said, 'Kneel down, my son, and ask God's forgiveness for your crime.'

'Never, sir,' answered Louvel, haughtily; 'I do not regret what I have done, and I would do it again, if necessary.'

Digitized by Google

'But, my friend, you have but one last effort to make to go to heaven. Come, be humble——'

'I shall go to heaven, just as you will, if there is one. Leave me alone, pray; think of yourself, not of me.'

'My dear child, I beseech you,' insisted the abbé, think of the salvation of your soul; say that you repent.'

'Sir,' indignantly retorted Louvel, 'I have already done a good many things to please you; you are stepping beyond the bounds of your duty.'[1]

Hardly had Louvel said these words than he ascended the steps so rapidly that the assistants were obliged to hold him back. He took his place unaided on the fatal plank, and at six o'clock precisely Louvel's head fell into the basket.

We took the corpse to the cemetery of the Barrière du Maine, but we were afterwards ordered to dig it up and bury it in another spot. The secret of this new burial remained unknown to all, save to the executioner and his assistants, who, on this occasion only, acted as gravediggers.

[1] The highly improper discussion raised by the Abbé Montés at the foot of the scaffold confirms a preceding note.—N. ED.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER LI.

MY EXECUTIONS.

ON December 6, 1820, the scaffold was again erected on the Place de Grève for a young man, Pierre Louis Martin, who had murdered his father. He was led to the scaffold with a black veil over his head, and, in accordance with the penalty edicted against parricides, his fist was cut off before he was beheaded. It was the first time I saw this kind of punishment. The same sentence was executed on July 21, 1821, on a man named Nicolas Boutillier, who had murdered his mother.

On August 11, in the same year, we were sent to Melun to execute one Joseph Gratureau.

A gentleman's blood was shed on the scaffold on October 19. The Viscount de Ruault, officer on half-pay, was sentenced to death for trying to murder General Dujon. He died with great courage.

Six days later it was the turn of a coachman, named Jacques Louis Houster, sentenced for the murder of his mistress.

On January 9, 1822, we executed another young man under age, Jules Louis Théophile Guichet, for the murder of a woman.

Digitized by Google

On April 2 following we went to Versailles and executed Pierre Roux, wine-merchant, and Jacques Antoine Lecourt, a working man, who had killed a man on the road to Essonne. Their object was theft.

On the 20th of the same month we had to go to Beauvais for a double execution; that of Louis Nicolas Mahon, upholsterer, and Charles Mancheron, labourer, convicted of having murdered a young man they hated. The execution took place at mid-day.

On July 27 following we went again in the department of Oise, but this time our halting-place was Compiègne. The whole department was in a state of terror in consequence of the large number of fires which were constantly taking place throughout the locality. The judicial authorities wished to make an example. A pork-butcher, named Louis Charlemagne Gosslin, was found guilty of having set fire to twenty-two houses in a single village. He was executed at twelve on the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, at Compiègne; he showed great coolness, and to the last protested that he was innocent.

All provincial executions used to take place in the public square at mid-day in presence of large crowds. The custom of executing in the middle of the day was also being adopted in Paris. Things have altered since then; nowadays, one executes at dawn, before the prison gate; a mysterious veil is cast, as it were, over the proceedings, as if the law were ashamed of what it is doing.

Digitized by Google

I. *The four Sergeants of La Rochelle.*

On September 21 my father and I went to the Conciergerie on a very sad errand. This time we had not to deal with ordinary criminals prompted to crime by the vilest passions; our victims, in the present case, were four unfortunate young men, victims of political fanaticism and of the secret intrigues of a party which tried to sap the throne of the Bourbons during the whole of the Restoration. It is not within my province to give a history of *carbonarism*—of that secret association imported from Italy, which counted princes as well as artisans in its ranks. The society was composed of *ventas*, or small groups of conspirators, who acted upon directions from a superior council. Precautions were taken to render the discovery of the society as a whole almost impossible. A batch of well-known men, Lafayette, Dupont, Manuel, Voyer d'Argenson, Benjamin Constant, Foy, Laffitte, &c., not content with the agitation they fomented in public assemblies and in the press, put themselves at the head of an active permanent conspiracy, the first effects of which were to be fatal to their obscure accomplices.

The army had never been attached to the restored Bourbons; the conspirators endeavoured to spread disaffection among the soldiers. In one instance at least they were successful. A *venta* was formed in the 45th line regiment. In the 45th there was a young sergeant of exalted views, generous aspirations, and great per

Digitized by Google

sonal advantages, who had much influence over his companions. Bories (such was his name) was tall, handsome, and precociously eloquent; he was a man of no ordinary cast, and the *carbonari* pitched upon him as a highly useful recruit. Bories was only too disposed to enter into their views; he organised a *venta* in the 45th, and gave several of his comrades the dagger which was the symbol of the secret association.

In spite of the religious secrecy maintained by the conspirators of the 45th, they were soon regarded with suspicion. They were too young to conspire effectually; they did not sufficiently conceal their feelings, and this was enough to awaken the attention of their superiors. At the time of a foiled attempt of General Berton's at Saumur, Bories was already arrested, although he had given no signal of insurrection. But treason came in; Goupillon, one of the youngest plotters, revealed the secret of the *venta* to the colonel of the regiment, and on the same evening all those concerned in *carbonarism* were arrested.

Almost every one of them admitted their crime. Bories alone persisted in a system of flat denial. Promises no more than threats could induce him to speak out. All the accused were transferred to Paris. At the Conciergerie Bories resumed his leadership. He wished to take the responsibility of the whole affair and save his companions. Ardent as he was in his democratic faith, he was also desirous to prevent any discovery that might have proved damaging to his cause; and he agreed with his friends that whatever might

Digitized by Google

occur they should in no way compromise the success of their cause. The prisoners acted upon this system of defence in the trial, which began on August 21, 1822.

Twenty-five persons were implicated. These were: Massias, captain; Bories, sergeant-major; Hénon, schoolmaster; Baradère, barrister; Gauran, surgeon; Rosé, clerk; Pommier, sergeant-major; Goubin, Raoulx, and Amis, sergeants; Goupillon, Bicheron, Labouré, Cochet, Castille, Lutron, Huc, Barlet, Perrion, Lefebvre, Thomas, Gautier, Lecoq, Dariotscy, and Demais, soldiers. The trial lasted a fortnight. The prisoners did as they had agreed; they denied the charges, and left Bories to bear the brunt of the danger. With admirable self-abnegation he admitted everything, and it was no fault of his if he was not the only victim. It was in vain that the counsel did their utmost to save some of their clients. The Procureur-Général was pitiless: 'No human eloquence,' he exclaimed, 'could save the life of Bories.' Before the close of the trial the President of the Court asked the prisoners if they had anything to say. Bories was the only one who answered. Faithful to his generous intention, he rose, and in a firm and grave voice he pronounced the following words:

'Gentlemen of the Jury: You have heard the indictment, the witnesses, and the debates of our trial; and after what you heard you were, no doubt, surprised when M. le Procureur said "that no human eloquence could save my life." He pointed me out as the leader. I accept the responsibility. Happy shall I be if my death can save my companions.'

Digitized by Google

These noble expressions did not produce the requisite effect. Bories, Pommier, Raoulx, and Goubin, the four sergeants of La Rochelle, were sentenced to death. Different penalties were inflicted upon the other prisoners. The four young men listened with perfect calmness to the sentence which forfeited their lives. Bories turned to his counsel, gave him a jewel, and asked him to hand it over to a person whose address he gave him. The secret of this message was only known later. During thirty years since the execution of Bories and his companions, I saw a woman who at first was young and then turned prematurely old, going every morning to the Mont Parnasse cemetery; she placed a flower on Bories' grave and then silently withdrew. The poor woman died a few years ago. She was Bories' sweetheart.

The four sergeants were transferred to Bicêtre. Three of them, Goubin, Raoulx, and Pommier, had appealed against the decision of the Court; but when they heard that Bories had refused to avail himself of this last chance of salvation, they followed his example and withdrew their appeal. An attempt was made by the party to which they belonged to bribe the governor of Bicêtre and enable the prisoners to escape; but the governor's uncle—an unworthy priest—betrayed the secret and thereby frustrated all other plans of the same kind.

On September 21 Bories and his companions were taken to the Conciergerie. They one and all declined the consolations of religion. When they entered the

Digitized by Google

room whence they were to be transferred to the guillotine, Bories spoke to his three friends: 'Dear comrades,' he said, 'our time is come; let us show that we were worthy of our cause. Forgive me for having led you to this miserable death. Our blood shall not flow without result. Long live liberty!'

The three sergeants rushed into his arms, repeating his cry with extraordinary enthusiasm. The toilet began; they all submitted to it with noble dignity. Raoulx, the youngest, was the most cheerful. 'Poor Raoulx!' said he, alluding to his short stature, 'what shall remain of you when your head is gone?' Our departure from the Conciergerie was appointed for four o'clock P.M.; we were still at the prison at five o'clock. During this long hour the Council of Ministers was deliberating on the question whether the convicts should be reprieved or not. King Louis XVIII., it was said, was in favour of clemency; Monsieur, his brother, and his friends were for execution, and the latter opinion prevailed. Vain efforts were made to obtain revelations from the four sergeants. They refused to answer, saying that they preferred death to dishonour.

At five o'clock we started for the Grève. There was a numerous gathering of soldiers and gendarmes, for the authorities apprehended an attempt to save the prisoners. At the foot of the scaffold the four young men again refused to listen to the exhortations of the ecclesiastic who was with them. Bories, being a Protestant, had more reasons than his friends to decline the services of a Catholic clergyman. They again embraced,

Digitized by Google

and then the youngest stepped forward and gave himself up to us. He advanced on the platform with an unfaltering step, and while he was being strapped to the plank he cried: '*Vive la liberté!*'

Goubin came next, and he displayed as much fortitude as Raoulx. He also cried in a clear and firm voice: '*Vive la liberté!*'

Pommier was the third victim; he uttered the same cry as his friends.

At last Bories' turn came. The sight of a treble execution had at last shaken the young sergeant's stoicism, and his eyes were full of tears; but he recovered his self-possession on reaching the platform, and looking at the crowd below he said:

'Brothers, if I am weeping, it is not for myself but for my poor friends who have just been killed before me. To-day you are silent; but a time shall come when you will repeat my last cry of "*Vive la liberté!*"'

He was pushed towards the plank, and his head fell into the basket. Eight years after a conquering people entered the Hôtel-de-Ville and overthrew the last of the Bourbons, to the dying cry of the four sergeants of La Rochelle.

II. *Castaing.*

It is the executioner's fate to fall from political victims to the most vulgar criminals, and *vice versâ*. Before passing to the year 1823 I have to mention two cases, not of execution, but of exhibition on the scaffold.

Digitized by Google

Firstly, that of Cognard, calling himself Count de Saint-Hélène; and secondly, that of General Jean Sarrasin. The history of the former is well known. He was an escaped convict, and had taken possession of the papers of the real Count de Saint-Hélène, who died in Spain under suspicious circumstances. Cognard happened to resemble the Count; he returned to France, passed himself off for the dead nobleman, was accepted as such, led a brilliant life, and rose to the highest military dignities, until he was identified by a fellow convict. Cognard was sentenced to hard labour for life, and to exhibition on the scaffold. The hardened ruffian suffered punishment with extreme cynicism, and died at Toulon sixteen years after his identification.

Sarrasin was no impostor; he was a real general. His crime was polygamy, for which he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and to exhibition during an hour. He had married three wives: one in Italy, another in England, and a third one in France.

My next execution occurred on May 21, 1823. The culprit was a German tailor of the name of Feldtmann, who had murdered his daughter. On July 18 following, my father and I executed at Montreuil an agricultural labourer, named Laizier, who had murdered his father-in-law.

On December 6 of the same year I had to take the life of one of those great criminals who might be called the lions of crime because they have the privilege of engrossing public attention; I allude to Edme-Samuel Castaing, physician, aged 27. Castaing poisoned two

Digitized by Google

of his intimate friends—two brothers named Ballet—after inducing them to bequeath their property to their friend and doctor. Castaing was sentenced to death on November 19, and a little more than a fortnight after I had to deal with him. My father was with me. When the culprit was brought before us we wondered how so black a soul could lie under so prepossessing an appearance. Castaing's face was soft and expressive; his features were strikingly handsome; and his blue eyes were void of any ferocious expression. When he saw us he shook a little, and appeared afraid that we should in any way hurt him, for he said: 'Pray do not harm me; you'll kill me ere long; until then it is of no use to make me suffer.' While his hair was being cut he exclaimed, alluding to his victims: 'Oh, my poor friends, what would you say if you saw me in this sad position? I would have given my life to save you, and I am charged with your death!' These words moved me; I was young and inexperienced, and it seemed to me impossible that a man could persist in a heinous falsehood in the face of death. I suppose he noticed the effect his words produced, for just as Fauconnier, our chief assistant, was proceeding to bind his hands, he turned to me and said: 'Bind my hands, sir, and do not draw the cords too tight.' I acquiesced, and he thanked me. On the way to the Grève he never ceased protesting that he was innocent. The Abbé Montés listened to him with anything but a convinced air, and he besought him to relieve his conscience and confess his guilt. The sight of the scaffold made Castaing

Digitized by Google

shudder; the sinister aspect of the guillotine obviously caused him more terror than the idea of death. His fortitude vanished, and our assistants had to carry him up to the platform. He fell on his knees, and stretching out his hands towards the Abbé Montés, he cried in a lamentable voice: 'Forgive me, father; I am guilty. Will God forgive me?' The priest blessed him, and made him kiss a crucifix. As for me, I was astounded. The suddenness of the man's confession almost overcame me. Henceforth I was more sceptical when culprits assured me of their innocence.

III. *Brochetti, Dagron, Papavoine, &c.*

On January 24, 1824, I led a mother and her son to the guillotine. A young working man of the name of Lecouffe murdered an old woman known by the name of Mother Jérome, with the purpose of appropriating her money. It was eventually discovered that the idea of this horrible deed belonged to the murderer's mother. Both were sentenced to death. Their journey from the Conciergerie to the Grève was one of the most disgusting I ever saw. Lecouffe spoke to his mother with extreme violence of language, and the woman answered in the same tone. They insulted each other to the last.

Three executions on April 20 of the same year Ochard, Renaud, and Delaporte were highwaymen who excelled in the art of waylaying stage-coaches, and killing the passengers if they refused to give up their money

Digitized by Google

The scene of their exploits was the Forest of Bondy, near Paris. They were executed at four o'clock in the afternoon, and died as fearlessly as if they had been innocent.

On May 22 the scaffold was again erected for the execution of an Italian, a native of Rome, named Antonio Brochetti. He was imprisoned at Bicêtre at the time of the murder, he having been previously sentenced to hard labour for life. He killed one of the turnkeys, with no other object than putting an end to his own life. Life in a prison or in the hulks seemed to him a much more severe punishment than death. His wish was fulfilled; he was condemned to death, and executed on the Place de Grève five days after, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

He went to the scaffold with eagerness. 'I would rather die a thousand times than go to the hulks!' he exclaimed several times. Since Brochetti's execution the severity displayed in French penitentiaries has increased; and his example has been followed by many.

After Brochetti I executed a gardener, Nicolas Robert Dagron. This man had poisoned his wife and his son. He was guillotined on July 1. Four o'clock was then the usual time for executions in Paris, as mid-day was the time appointed in the provinces. On the same evening we received the visit of a woman who claimed Dagron's body; I complied with her wish.

No other executions took place in Paris in the course of the year 1824; but I had to go to Beauvais on

Digitized by Google

August 14 to execute a young murderer of the name of Dupuis.

On February 26, in the following year (1825), I again went to Beauvais to put to death two men, François Morel and Jacques Couvreux, who had murdered a priest and his servant. As one may see, executions at Beauvais were frequent.

My next execution demands more circumstantial details than those I have just mentioned. It was on March 24, 1825, that I received an order to put to death on the following afternoon Louis Auguste Papavoine, cloth merchant, aged 41, who had been sentenced on the 26th of the preceding month by the assize court of the Seine for having murdered two children in the wood of Vincennes. Papavoine was one of the strangest men we ever had to deal with. He had, as it were, no conscience of his villany. He murdered two children, respectively aged 5 and 6, in open daylight and in presence of their mother, without the slightest motive for committing the crime. His case, I think, was one for doctors, not for judges. A long and minute investigation was made, but no connection whatever between the family of the victims and Papavoine could be discovered. When Papavoine appeared before the jury he at first tried to deny his crime, but soon after he made a full confession ; he was, however, unable to furnish a reason for the murder, but he said that at the time he was under the influence of fever and delirium.

This was a premature excuse for a jury of the period. In our days Papavoine could hardly have been sentenced,

Digitized by Google

but science was not then as advanced and liberal as it is now. The plea of insanity was, however, urged by Papavoine's counsel, M. Paillet. A slight acquaintance with Papavoine's family induced this eminent barrister to accept the task of defending the child-killer. He discharged it with an eloquence which should have secured a favourable verdict; but his theory appeared too novel to the jury; and although the same plea was successfully urged on many subsequent occasions, Papavoine was declared answerable and sentenced to death. The jurors believed in his ruse and hypocrisy, and they not only brought in a verdict of guilty, but declared the crime to have been committed with *premeditation*. It is difficult to understand how such premeditation could have existed, for it was proved that Papavoine had no knowledge of the persons he chanced to meet in the wood of Vincennes.

The culprit was unmoved by his sentence. 'I appeal to Divine justice,' were his only words.

Divine justice was, indeed, his only hope, for his appeal was dismissed, and his family vainly implored royal clemency. Papavoine was executed on March 25, at twenty-five minutes past four o'clock. He went to death in a state of indifference and apathy, seemingly unconscious of his fearful position. The Abbé Montés was the only man who could bespeak his attention. On the way he turned twice to me asking whether we had a long way to go; he was anxious to see the end as soon as possible. When we reached the scaffold he addressed the abbé in the following terms:

Digitized by Google

'I do not regret life,' he said; 'ill as I was, I found no pleasure in it. I do not even think of my poor old mother. What smites my conscience is the death of those poor little children I was unfortunate enough to slay.'

The Abbé Montés congratulated him on his good sentiments. Papavoine knelt at the foot of the scaffold, kissed the crucifix, and went up the steps supported by two assistants. While the weigh-plank on which he was strapped was being lowered, I distinctly heard him say the following words:

'My God, have mercy upon me!'

I touched my father's arm, and we waited until his last word to give the signal.

Opinions are still divided on Papavoine; some persist in regarding him as a type of bestial ferocity, while the majority agree in thinking that he was a maniac. It seems impossible that he could have deliberately killed for the mere pleasure of killing. Similar instances of the same kind of crime have occurred since, and juries have taken a merciful view of the case. On the whole I preferred executing Papavoine, to being a member of the jury who found him guilty.

IV. *Asselineau and Ulbach.*

After the execution of Papavoine we went to Versailles on May 17 following, for the execution of a young man of nineteen, Gilbert Prunier, native of Poissy, sentenced for murder and robbery. It took place on the

Digitized by Google

old market square at twelve o'clock. On October 28, of the same year, we executed on the same square and at the same hour, one François Mercier, sentenced to death for attempted murder. Our presence was required at Beauvais on November 5 for the execution of an agricultural labourer, who had attempted to murder his wife. This time the execution came off at half-past two. On December 21 we reappeared on the Grève to execute a man named Denis Plessis, who had poisoned one of his fellow-workmen.

I must beg the reader not to tire of this sad and dry list. I have promised a history of the scaffold, and I wish it to be as complete as possible.

In 1826 there was only one execution; it is true that two men perished at a time. Virgilio Malaguti and Gaetano Rata, Italians, were sentenced to death for the murder of a money-changer of the Palais Royal. They were respectively aged twenty-three and nineteen years. We executed them on the 26th.

We inaugurated the year 1827 by two executions at Versailles; Julien Chevreau, who had murdered on the high-road, was beheaded on February 16; Thérèse Desplaces, aged thirty-six, was sentenced to death for poisoning, and executed on March 13.

On the 21st of the following month we went to Provins (Seine-et-Marne), for a double execution. An agricultural labourer and his wife, Cyprien and Adelaide Ninonet, were neighbours of a rich widow of the name of Corpedanne, who lived with her daughter. Ninonet and his wife did not hesitate to murder these two women, in

Digitized by Google

the hope of stealing whatever property might be in the house. The murderers were not immediately apprehended; they were not even suspected. Their crime was revealed in a way worth relating. One of the victims, Madame Corpedanne, was not dead. As she was recovering from a state of insensibility, she was horrified on discovering that the charge of her body (for she was thought to be dead) was given to Ninonet's wife. The unfortunate victim saw herself in the hands of her murderess; she had the presence of mind to give no signs of life, and as soon as a third party arrived, she pointed to the woman and her husband as her assassins.

The Ninonets were executed at twelve o'clock on the Place Saint Ayeul, before the church which bears that name. The woman moaned piteously, but public indignation was so intense that she failed to excite any sympathy.

I have now to mention one of the executions that impressed me most in the course of my career. The culprit was an unfortunate young man, Jean-Baptiste Asselineau by name, native of the department of the Nièvre, who was executed on May 8, 1827, on the Place de Grève. He was barely twenty, and his face was one of the most intelligent and sympathetic I ever saw. Somehow or other he had got into bad habits, and then stepped into crime. From 1825 to 1826 he committed a considerable number of forgeries. From forgery to murder there is but a step; Asselineau yielded to evil temptation and murdered a man he knew, Jean-Baptiste Brouet. He took possession of his victim's property, and

Digitized by Google

it was while attempting to pass off bills belonging to Brouet that he was apprehended.

The public was surprised at the precocious perversity of a boy whose criminal career had commenced at the age of seventeen and reached its climax three years after; and to me this perversity appeared still more wonderful when I saw Asselineau for the first time. He was calm and resigned when we took him at the Conciergerie. He expressed much grief, not on his own account, but because of the dishonour he had heaped upon his family. On the way to the Grève he showed unlimited repentance; and I was profoundly moved by the softness of his words and the evident sincerity of his anguish. He embraced the Abbé Montés and offered no resistance.

Ten days after we again erected the guillotine for one Alexandre Buisson, aged twenty-nine years, who had murdered and robbed. On July 18, at Versailles, we executed a native of Rambouillet, named Charles Christopher Hervé, sentenced for poisoning his daughter. On August 4 we likewise put to death Jean-Baptiste Emery, aged thirty-eight years, for attempting to poison one of his friends.

Here is another of the few murderers who are of a nature to inspire interest, if not sympathy. Honoré François Ulbach was the murderer of Aimée Millot, better known as the shepherdess of Ivry. This affair was so interesting that, like the Lesurques business, it has been dramatised and put on the stage. Ulbach was an orphan; he was employed by a wine-merchant of the Barrière Fontainebleau, and he was remarkable for his

Digitized by Google

zeal and good temper up to the time when he fell in love with a young girl called Aimée Millot, who was in the service of a lady in the neighbourhood. The girl used to take her mistress's goats to graze near the wine-merchant's shop. The young people got to know each other, and a mutual affection sprung up between them. This led Ulbach to neglect his duties so much that his master at first remonstrated, and then discharged him; in consequence of this the girl, on the advice of her mistress, told Ulbach that they must part. The unfortunate young man tried to change her mind, but perceiving that his arguments were fruitlessly urged, he drew a knife and stabbed her five times.

Ulbach was twenty years of age, and Aimée was nineteen. The poor girl died almost immediately. As to Ulbach he gave himself up to the police, seeking in expiation some consolation for a crime which he bitterly regretted.

Ulbach was arraigned before the assize court of the Seine; he did not even take the trouble to defend himself. After a trial of a few hours he was sentenced to death. He heard the awful sentence without a word of regret, and when the president of the court informed him that he had a delay of three days to appeal against capital punishment, he coldly answered:

'I have no wish to appeal.'

Such was his intention, but his counsel and the Abbé Montés persuaded him not to persist in his purpose. His appeal, however, was rejected, and on September 10 he was given up to us. 'I do not regret life,' he said;

Digitized by Google

'I was only a poor orphan, and I have lost the only person I wanted to be my wife.' He seemed to listen with respect to the words of the priest; but his thoughts were not altogether divested of the feelings of this earth, for he said to the Abbé Montés: 'Yes, father, I am sorry I murdered my beloved, since I lost her for ever; but if I find her in heaven, do you think she will forgive me?'

The unfortunate man thought more of the forgiveness of his victim than of the judgment of the Almighty. Several witnesses said that Ulbach had had a foreboding of his death, for when he began to feel jealous he said on several occasions: 'I feel I shall die on the scaffold.' On another occasion, hearing a public crier who sold accounts of a recent execution, he observed: 'This is what shall soon be done for me,' and, imitating the crier's voice, he said: '"Buy for a penny the sentence of death and execution of Honoré François Ulbach."'

Ulbach's execution was the last that occurred in 1827. My services had been required eight times during the year. Our office was not a sinecure.

V. *Contrafatto, Robert Saint-Clair, and Benoit.*

It was at the beginning of the year 1828 that the exhibition of the Abbé Joseph Contrafatto took place. This priest, who was born at Piazza, in Sicily, was sentenced by the assize court of Paris to hard labour for life, and to exhibition during an hour, after being marked on the right shoulder with the letters T F. His crime

Digitized by Google

can hardly be described: he had committed a criminal attempt upon a little girl.

I am bound to say that the Abbé Contrafatto's attitude was full of Christian humility. The crowd insulted and hooted him; as long as the exhibition lasted he did not give the slightest sign of impatience. His countenance was undoubtedly that of an innocent man. Singularly enough, he found a devoted friend in the person of M. Charles Ledru, son of a friend of Lesurques, who, as counsel in the civil suit, had contributed more than anybody else to his conviction. M. Ledru gave his close attention to the affair, and soon became convinced that Contrafatto was innocent. He spared no pains to allay the misfortune for which, in his own opinion, he was partly responsible. Contrafatto's punishment was gradually softened, and at length, after remaining in the hulks for seventeen years, the abbé recovered his liberty. His generous saviour was no small loser in consequence of his efforts to obtain Contrafatto's freedom; he made certain declarations which were considered more than imprudent by his colleagues, who took upon themselves to disbar him. Of course the question whether Contrafatto was guilty or not still remains open, but there is every reason to believe in his innocence.

Five months after Contrafatto's exhibition we returned to the more cruel necessities of our functions. We had to execute a man of the name of Nicolas Roch, who had been sentenced to death for murder on the high road. On October 28 in the same year I executed two women at Versailles; one had murdered her husband,

Digitized by Google

the other her mother. The latter, according to the law of the time, was to suffer the amputation of the fist before execution. For this complication of capital punishment, my father had invented a contrivance by which the fist was so compressed that the pain was considerably diminished. Catherine Darcy (the murderess in question), however, uttered fearful shrieks when her fist was cut; her cries only subsided when the knife of the guillotine came down upon her neck.

On June 13, 1829, we returned to the Place de Grève, and executed a Belgian named Philippe François Debacker, who had murdered his mistress and another woman. Thirteen days after we went again to Versailles, where we executed François Blondé, carrier, for murder. On August 5, Pierre Augustin Billau, pork butcher, was executed. This man's crime produced great sensation in Paris: he attempted to murder his wife with a devilish display of cruelty. The market women of La Halle hooted him on his way to the Grève. On January 27, 1830, I executed Jean-Baptiste Guérin, Jean Louis Bardon, and Louis Chandelet, condemned for murder and theft. Then came André Lepauvre, sentenced for the murder of his uncle (Feb. 9); Eugène Poteau, for attempted murder (Feb. 26); Jean Pierre Martin, for murder in the Bois de Boulogne (July 22). This was the last head that fell under the Restoration—the last also that fell on the Place de Grève. A revolution swept away the old monarchy, and placed on the throne the son of a man executed by my grandfather, the Duke d'Orléans, better known as Philippe Égalité. One of the effects of

Digitized by Google

the revolution was the transfer of the guillotine to the Barrière Saint-Jacques.

No execution took place in Paris throughout the year 1831. It was otherwise in other parts of my jurisdiction. The first of the year occurred at Versailles, and the culprit was an accomplice of a man named Daumas-Dupin, who had robbed and murdered one M. Prudhomme and his wife. Robert Saint-Clair, such was the criminal's name, was an escaped convict. He had sought shelter in Switzerland, where he was apprehended and handed over to the French authorities. His arrest was attended with rather curious circumstances. Robert Saint-Clair was dining at a *table d'hôte* opposite a distinguished writer who gave a great deal of attention to phrenology and physiognomy—sciences which were then in fashion. The writer in question was a very amiable and amusing *causeur*, and he entertained those who were at table by the novelty of his observations. Robert Saint-Clair alone was incredulous, and little disposed to like a science which enabled the adept to discover the secret instincts and leanings of other persons from a mere scrutiny of their features. He shrugged his shoulders, and even expressed in an uncivil way his disgust for the theories of the speaker. The latter, on his side, began to observe the dissenter; he seemed struck by some idea suggested by his scrutiny, and suddenly addressing Saint-Clair:

'You seem to doubt the truth of what I say,' said he; 'will you allow me to give you a proof of what I said by telling you what your features indicate?'

Digitized by Google

'Very well,' answered Saint-Clair, though not without hesitation.

'They show the cunning of the fox and the ferocity of the wolf.'

The remark was anything but flattering. Saint-Clair started, and as he had passed himself off as an officer it was at first feared that he would challenge the bold physiognomist. But nothing of the kind occurred; Saint-Clair did not move, and remained silent until the end of the dinner. He was rising with the others when a number of gendarmes entered the room and asked the travellers to exhibit their passports. Saint-Clair showed his, and although it was quite *en règle*, he was identified, arrested on the spot, and shortly after sent back to France. I may add that he died with courage.

It was only on February 3, 1832, after an interruption of eighteen months, that the guillotine was again required. It was erected, not on the Place de Grève, but on the cross road of the Barrière Saint-Jacques. The execution took place in the morning at nine o'clock, and the culprit was brought straight from Bicêtre in a covered carriage. The hideous cart had seen its time.

On July 13, 1832, I had to put to death a very young although very great criminal, whose deeds had created much sensation: Nicolas Théodore Frédéric Benoît, son of a highly respected justice of the peace in the Ardennes, who suffered in atonement of two murders, the second of which had been perpetrated in order to conceal the first deed.

Young Benoît began by murdering his mother, after

Digitized by Google

stealing from her bedroom a bag which contained 4,000 francs. The crime was so horrible that no one thought of suspecting the real murderer, who was only nineteen, and had received an excellent education. A neighbour of M. Benoît's, who had a grudge against him, was suspected, arrested, and tried. He was acquitted by a bare majority, and but just escaped the scaffold. Meanwhile Frédéric was sent to Nancy, and then to Paris, where he began to study law. But the young murderer plunged into a life of dissipation and vice, and an unworthy fellow of the name of Formage became his boon companion. Their intimacy was such that Frédéric Benoît told Formage of his previous crime. Formage was not much better than Benoît, for, instead of separating from him, he continued on intimate terms with him, until his return home. He then wrote to him, asking for money, and threatening to reveal his secret if he refused to send him the requisite sum. Benoît was quite equal to the situation: he returned to Paris, cajoled his companion, and one afternoon he murdered him in an hotel at Versailles.

What he regarded as the guarantee of his safety was the cause of his death. Benoît had been seen in Paris on the eve of the crime, and at Versailles in Formage's company; and although he had managed to escape from the hotel after the murder, he was apprehended and charged. An investigation led to the discovery of a copy of the letter in which Formage threatened to inform against him, and thus the cause of his crime became known.

Digitized by Google

Benoît stoutly denied the overwhelming charges brought against him; he displayed throughout his defence no ordinary ability, but he had to deal with a formidable opponent. The inhabitant of Vougiers who had been tried by mistake took up the civil prosecution, and entrusted M. Chaix d'Est-Ange, the celebrated barrister, with the task of showing his innocence. M. Chaix joined the public prosecutor in his denunciation of the prisoner, and Benoît was sentenced to the death of parricides; that is, with bare feet, a shirt as his only garment, and a black veil over his head.

When we reached the prison of Bicêtre, where the unhappy young man was incarcerated, we heard his cries through the walls of the cell when he was informed that death was at hand. He appeared in the hall, where we were waiting for him, supported by two warders. This was the first time I beheld such weakness before death. He said nothing while my assistants were cutting his hair, but when they undressed him he uttered frightful shrieks. The only words of his I could understand were 'Mercy!' 'Pity!' 'I am innocent!' 'Do not kill me!' He tried to rise, but could not. The black veil was spread over his head, and we started for the guillotine. Benoît fainted several times on the way. Whenever he recovered he exclaimed in a piteous tone: 'M. Chaix d'Est-Ange has caused my death. My poor mother, you know I am innocent!' The priest who supported him did not spare his encouragements, but Benoît still persisted in saying he was innocent. It was only when he saw the guillotine that he knelt and confessed his

Digitized by Google

guilt. This confession I distinctly heard, although it was only intended for the ears of the priest, and I was relieved when it came out, for I had followed the trial, and in my humble judgment Benoît had been convicted on proofs which appeared to me anything but conclusive.

Benoît was carried up to the platform, for he could not be induced to walk. He was insensible while my assistants strapped him to the weigh-plank.

On retiring, my father (who usually accompanied me on such occasions) said to me that, since the execution of Madame Dubarry, he had never seen an instance of such weakness on the scaffold.

'Remark,' he added, 'the powerlessness of capital punishment; we have just executed a man who had the greatest fear of death. Well, the man was not twenty-one, and yet he had already committed two murders. Fear of capital punishment did not deter him.'

I was quite of his opinion. My father shrugged his shoulders, and continued: 'Fear of death is a physical sentiment which is linked with the instinct of conservation. When a man is ill, or in great peril, then he fears death, but never is he deterred by the prospect of distant death; and if the man be a ruffian the temptation of crime will get the better of whatever lurking apprehension he may have.'

VI. *Lacenaire, Fieschi, and Alibaud.*

Few executions took place in 1833, and 1834 was one of happy inaction. It was only on July 11, 1835,

Digitized by Google

that we received an order to put to death one Jean Laborde, an agricultural labourer sentenced for murder; he was executed at Melun. On October 24 a soldier named Roch Bélard, who had murdered one of his friends, passed through our hands; and two celebrated criminals, Lacenaire and Avril, were executed at the beginning of 1836.

Lacenaire especially deserved the name of 'lion of crime' which I ventured to give to Castaing. Never before did a murderer engross public attention to such a degree; never before was a criminal beheld with more curiosity—I will even say with more enthusiasm. The object of Lacenaire and his accomplice was theft, and the means murder. To murder and rob the commissionnaire of a bank in charge of bank-notes, was the chimera which he pursued with incredible pertinacity. He was not successful; and several fruitless attempts betrayed Lacenaire and his accomplices into the hands of the police.

Lacenaire displayed the most extraordinary cynicism and audacity. Instead of confessing that he was led to commit his crimes by his evil passions, he endeavoured to explain them by his principles; and he expressed doctrines which were alike antagonistic with morality and good sense. Gifted with eminent faculties, he clothed his shameless sophisms in brilliant language; and he was listened to with indulgence; his prose, his verses, were read with avidity, and he became the hero of the day. This, I think, was a mistake. Lacenaire made a pedestal of the scaffold, and died with

Digitized by Google

the consoling consciousness that he was a celebrated man.

Lacenaire and Avril, his accomplice—or rather one of his accomplices—was sentenced to death on November 15. Both appealed against the sentence; but the former declared that he only did so 'in order to have time to write his memoirs.' Lacenaire's expectations were frustrated; he could not conclude his scandalous biography; but a well-known writer undertook the task after Lacenaire's death, and the work was published.

The reader, if he likes, can find in the 'Causes Célèbres,' by M. Fouquier, an account of Lacenaire's last acts. There is no need, therefore, for me to give further details than those of my personal contact with this famous murderer. When we arrived at Bicêtre, he came to us gracefully, and smoked a cigar while his hair was being cut. Avril showed no less coolness. The morning was raw and cold; he could not help shivering. 'It's awfully cold,' he said; 'they'll think I am afraid.' He asked for a glass of brandy, which was handed to him by a warder. 'Thanks, old fellow,' said Avril, drinking it off. He then bade farewell to the turnkeys, while Lacenaire was bowing ceremoniously. The journey to the guillotine was a long one, for the roads were muddy, and the carriage advanced with some difficulty. Abbé Montés made a final effort to touch the heart of Lacenaire, but the man's scepticism was too much for him. It was nearly half-past eight o'clock when we arrived. The culprits alighted first, and we followed them. Avril, whose execution was to take place first, embraced the priest,

Digitized by Google

who escorted him to the foot of the scaffold. He turned to Lacenaire, and cried in a strong voice:

'Farewell, Lacenaire; farewell, my mate!'

A smile appeared on the lips of the other culprit. The thump of the knife did not even make him start. In his turn he firmly went up the steps of the guillotine, and looked intently at the crowd. We thought he was about to speak; but he held his tongue, and stretched out of his own accord on the plank, which was still dripping with Avril's blood. The knife came down, and Lacenaire's head fell into the basket. Some newspapers of the period pretended that there was an interval of twenty seconds, and that the knife stopped before it reached Lacenaire's neck. This was altogether untrue. This detail was probably invented for the sake of effect. No extraordinary event occurred while Lacenaire was being guillotined. I tried to contradict the report of the above invention, but no paper would print my letter. All I can say is that the famous criminal was remarkably cool and resolute, and that he suffered no more than Avril. My account, I know, differs from the official one, but I venture to assert that mine is correct.

Four weeks later the guillotine was again at work; the criminals were Fieschi, Morey, and Pépin, who had attempted to murder King Louis Philippe on July 28. Fieschi's attempt is well known: he invented an infernal machine, which he discharged as the King and his family were passing. None of the royal personages were wounded, but forty persons fell under Fieschi's bullets;

Digitized by Google

among others a marshal of France, several generals, and other men of distinction.

Fieschi was arrested. He was found to be an adventurer of a low kind; he had been a spy, and had become a political murderer out of interest. He tendered his services to a few fanatics, who were foolish enough to accept them. Fieschi began by naming them. These accomplices were no higher persons than a saddler of the Rue Saint-Victor, and a grocer of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Fieschi's cowardice forfeited the lives of these two men, whose participation in his crime was not so great as the chief criminal made it out to be. Morey, the saddler, and Pépin, the grocer, were sentenced to death, while another accomplice was condemned to imprisonment for twenty years.

Morey was a withered old man, but he had a proud heart, and he died with much dignity. Pépin was not forty years of age, and had four young children; he also was brave to the last. As to Fieschi, he fainted away while my assistants were strapping him.

On July 11 of the same year, we had to execute another regicide. Alibaud—such was his name—was far superior to Fieschi. He was twenty-six years of age, had been in the army, and was known as an honest and honourable man. He waited for the King's carriage at the corner of the Carrousal, and fired at the prince. Louis Philippe again escaped unhurt. Alibaud was led to the scaffold with a black veil over his head. He advanced to the side of the scaffold, and said: 'I

Digitized by Google

die for liberty and the extinction of infamous monarchy.' He died without fear or bravado.

VII. *Darmès, Béliard, Salmon, Poulmann, Pont, &c.*

There was no execution in Paris during the year 1839. The scaffold was only erected on February 29, 1840, for a common and not particularly interesting criminal. Only two more instances of capital punishment occurred in 1840, and our first execution in 1841 was on the person of one Marius Darmès, sentenced for firing a gun at King Louis Philippe. Darmès was a man of the same category as Alibaud, and he showed indomitable energy during the whole of his trial before the House of Peers. This was the third attempt on the King's life.

No executions in 1842.[1]

On November 6, 1843, at Versailles, execution of Clovis Joseph Béliard, condemned to death for murder. On November 30 of the same year, execution of Henri Salmon for murdering a man named Sèchepine in the wood of Vincennes. For some time past I had merely appeared on the scaffold, and I left the irksome duties of fetching the culprits, &c., to Piot, my first assistant. To my great surprise Piot came to me saying that Henri Salmon wished me to superintend the toilet in person. I of course gratified this wish. When I asked Salmon why he wished me to attend him rather than any other,

[1] A few unimportant executions are omitted in the present version of Sanson's Memoirs.

Digitized by Google

he said that he knew my family, and hoped that I would spare him as much as I could. I was touched, and did him all the good turns I could on the way to the guillotine.

The successor of Salmon on the guillotine was the notorious Poulmann, alias Durand, alias Legrand, whose hideous celebrity was almost equal to Lacenaire's. Poulmann was very intelligent; and if he did make a principle of murder and robbery, he at least possessed greater physical powers than Lacenaire. He was sentenced to death on January 27, 1844, for the murder of an old man who kept a wine-shop near Nangis. When the hour of punishment came he showed the most extraordinary courage. He was a confirmed materialist, and firmly believed in nihilism. Poulmann was particularly proud of his personal strength; and as it was feared that he would try and make a show of it before dying, I was requested to double the number of my assistants. These apprehensions were groundless. When my assistants advanced to bind his hands, Poulmann looked up angrily and asked whether it was the custom; 'because if it is not,' he added, 'I'll send you all tumbling over in less than a minute.' He, however, submitted. He would not allow the Abbé Montés to accompany him. When we reached the scaffold Poulmann looked at it without a shudder. 'Is that all?' said he, shrugging his shoulders. On reaching the platform Poulmann turned towards the assistants and exclaimed: 'I say, you fellows, won't you put a franc piece in my pocket for the gravedigger? It is bitterly cold, and the poor fellow must drink my health.'

Digitized by Google

Such were his last words.

On October 28, 1844, at Versailles, execution of Antoine Pont, sentenced to death for having poisoned his wife and then murdered his mistress in the forest of Sénart. The atrocity of this double crime absorbed public attention, and the scaffold was surrounded by an immense crowd who hooted the culprit.

. . . . . .

And now I have done. My notes end here. My father died in 1841, and from the time of his death I became an inactive spectator of executions. I had executed over a hundred persons, and I felt it was enough for me. I remained *de nomine* executioner; Piot, my first assistant, was also my factotum, and I merely attended executions as a matter of form. In fact I retained my functions, but I had not the courage to discharge them. Long before my dismissal in 1847 I was expecting and hoping that the Government would fulfil my dearest wish and enable me to retire without breaking the promise I had made to my father of never withdrawing of my own accord. My dismissal did come at last, and while some fifty eager individuals were competing for the office of executioner I greeted it as a deliverance.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

PUNISHMENTS NOT FOLLOWED BY DEATH.

DEGRADATION.

THE first category of punishments in force in France comprised *Degradation*, the *Pillory*, *Amende honorable*, *Flagellation*, and *Mutilation*. The first three of these penalties were rather moral than physical.

By *degradation*, the culprit was ignominiously stripped of the functions, privileges, and titles wherewith he was invested.

Officers of justice were publicly degraded. The execution of a sentence of death was always to be preceded by degradation. Thus, when Marshal de Biron was on the scaffold, the Chancellor of France deprived him of the insignia of the Order of the Holy Ghost.

The degradation of a nobleman was always attended with much solemnity. Thirty knights of proved courage met in council, and summoned to their presence the nobleman charged with felony. A king- or a herald-at-arms pronounced the accusation of treason, or broken faith, and if the charge was not well met, degradation took place in the following manner. Two scaffolds were erected in public: on one the judges were assembled, surrounded by heralds and men-at-arms; on the other stood the culprit, fully armed, with his shield stuck in a spike before him. He was then stripped of all his weapons,

Digitized by Google

beginning with the helmet; his shield was broken in three pieces; the king-at-arms poured a basin of hot water on his head, and priests sang the service of the dead during this impressive ceremony. The judges, clad in mourning, then went to church, whither the culprit was borne on a litter. After a *De Profundis* he was given up to the royal judge to be dealt with by High Justice. On some occasions he was allowed to outlive his infamy, as in the case of Captain Franget, a Gascon gentleman, who had treacherously surrendered Fontarobia to the Spaniards. He was degraded at Lyons in 1523, in the manner I have described, and afterwards set free.

Subsequently degradation was abandoned, because the sentence in itself was understood to imply the stigma. It was resumed in 1791 under the name of civil degradation. The clause was thus worded: 'The culprit shall be led to the public place, where sits the tribunal that passed sentence upon him. The clerk of the court shall address him in these words: "Your country has found you guilty of an infamous act; the law and the court strip you of your title of French citizen."'

Civil degradation is still in force, but it is not coupled with ceremony, and merely consists in the deprivation of certain rights mentioned in Article 34 of the Penal Code. However, according to martial law, no dishonourable sentence can be carried out without effective degradation.

PILLORY AND CARCAN.

Pillory succeeded carcan, which was adopted in 1719, and only disappeared a few years ago. The pillory was a kind of post or pillar to which, in token of infamy, criminals were chained. It was generally placed in a well-known spot. In Paris it was situated near the Halles. It consisted in an octagonal tower with a ground floor, and only one landing. The culprit was shown there during three consecutive market-

Digitized by Google

days. On each day he was taken round the pillory every half-hour, so that he should be seen on all sides. This species of exhibition differed according to towns; thus, at Orleans, where for the first time the pillory was used, it consisted in a wooden cage, six feet high, and only two feet and a half broad, in which the culprit was thrust, and obliged to remain in a standing posture. The cage revolved on a pivot, and the people had the right to turn it so as to see the prisoner on all sides, to hoot him, and to throw mud in his face.

The *Carcan* was rather an adjunct to the pillory than a new punishment. It was a circle, or iron collar, which the executioner riveted around the convict's neck. The convict was led forth on foot, both hands attached behind the executioner's cart, or tied behind his back. At the place designated for the punishment was a post, to which was linked a long chain, terminated by an iron collar six inches thick, which had a hinge. The neck of the convict was enclosed in this collar, which was then locked with a padlock. A placard indicating the crime of the culprit was sometimes stuck on his breast.

Crimes punishable by the pillory were bankruptcy, forgery, bigamy, fraud, cheating at cards, robbery of fruit, sale of prohibited books, and blasphemy. Under Francis I. and Henry II. this last crime was met by six hours of carcan. The application of carcan changed by dint of time, and when it disappeared from the French penal code it consisted in being attached in public by the neck to an iron collar for the space of an hour.

AMENDE HONORABLE, ETC.

In the long list of punishments inflicted in former days, *Amende honorable* held the last place. Perhaps this revolting punishment should have had a higher place, but it was intended to touch the mind, not the body. It was frequently a pre-

Digitized by Google

liminary step to a more severe punishment. The sole act of parading a prisoner in a cart through the streets was, however, a punishment inflicted upon petty thieves. In some cases it was also inflicted upon noblemen.

Among other moral inflictions should be mentioned the act, resorted to under the reign of St. Louis, of breaking a knight's spurs on a dunghill. In the middle ages a husband who suffered his wife to beat him was made to ride about the streets on a donkey with his head towards the tail. Cutting the table-cloth before whoever had committed an act of cowardice was another usage of the same kind. This was done to William of Hainaut, at the King of France's own table, because he had not avenged the murder of his grand-uncle.

FLAGELLATION.

Flagellation has been one of the most cruel and humiliating punishments. It was abolished in 1789, but continued in force in the navy, until the Provisional Government of 1848 finally suppressed it. Corporal punishment, however, is still in vigour in the hulks.

MUTILATIONS.

There is scarcely a single part of the body that has not been subjected to a separate and special torture: the eyes, mouth, tongue, ears, teeth, arms, hands, feet, and heart have been so many sources of suffering by fire and iron. Blindness, resorted to under the first two races of French kings, was inflicted by princes upon high personages whose attacks they feared, but whose lives they dared not take. Blindness was applied to Bernard, King of Italy, grandson of Charlemagne; and the Parliament of Senlis, in 873, ordered that the rebellious son of Charles the Bald should be deprived of his sight.

Digitized by Google

A red-hot iron passed before the eyes until, to use Joinville's expression, they were cooked; a steel point which was plunged in the centre of the organ; the plucking out from the socket—such were the instruments and means resorted to by justice and revenge, which in barbarous ages were often confounded.

The tongue has in all times been practised upon by the law. Louis IX., generally considered one of our wisest kings, ordered that blasphemers should be marked on the brow, that their lips should be burnt, and their tongue pierced with a red-hot iron. For this punishment he invented a round-shaped iron, which the executioner applied to the lips of the culprit, after heating it. Louis XII., the 'father of the people,' enacted that whoever uttered eight blasphemies should have his tongue torn out, and Louis XIV. re-established the law. The zeal of Francis I. for the triumph of the Catholic religion suggested new tortures, which were inflicted on the Protestants. Among the Huguenots burnt alive on January 21, 1535, in the presence of the King, was a man named Antoine Poile, whose tongue was pierced and attached to his cheek with an iron pin. The infliction usually took place before a church.

The amputation of the ear was a common punishment in the middle ages. It was practised on the serf who displeased his master. Two laws, one enacted in 1498, the other in 1534, alluded to this particular mutilation, which is also particularised as a punishment in the records of Anjou, Loudunais, La Marche, &c. Sauval gives the following account of it: 'The amputation of one ear was inflicted on dishonest servants, and cutpurses; a second offence cost them the other ear; death was the penalty of the third offence. When the first larceny was considerable it was the left ear which was cropped.'

The teeth also were within reach of the executioner. It was the wont to pull out the teeth of Jews to make them give up their money; and Louis XI., after the death of Jacques

Digitized by Google

d'Armagnac, Count de Nemours, ordered that his children should be taken to the Bastille, and that their teeth should be extracted.

The amputation of the fist is the form of mutilation which has the longest resisted the progress of civilisation. The Code of 1791, art. 4, enacted that 'whoever shall be condemned to death for murder or arson, shall be taken to the place of execution clad in a red shirt. A parricide shall have his head and face covered with a black cloth, which shall only be taken away before execution.' But the Code of 1810 returned to the old legislation, and decreed that the fist of a parricide should be amputated. It was only in 1832 that this useless cruelty was finally suppressed.

The amputation of the feet was a wholly mediæval punishment. The last instance of this cruel infliction was under the reign of St. Louis.

Another punishment which may be classed in the category of mutilations, was that which consisted in branding convicts with a red-hot iron. In older times, the culprit was branded with the *fleur-de-lys*. Afterwards, the letter V, impressed on the shoulder of thieves, was substituted, or the letters GAL (*galères*) when they were sent to the hulks. Soon after, the letters T F (*travaux forcés*) took the place of previous marks. This infliction was abolished by the law of April 28, 1832.

PUNISHMENTS FOLLOWED BY DEATH.

CAPITAL punishment has prevailed in all legislation in France, as almost everywhere else, and during a long period it was coupled with atrocious sufferings. And murder, or conspiracy against the State, were not the only crimes punished with death; among other crimes in which it was inflicted were pecuniary exactions committed by officers of the law, fraudulent

Digitized by Google

bankruptcy, forgery committed by State officials, peculation, false evidence, housebreaking and waylaying, smuggling, false marks on jewellery, the pettiest acts of theft, sacrilegious profanation, duelling, &c., &c. I may as well give a summary of the too numerous punishments entailing death which were in practice from ancient time to our days.

THE CROSS.

The Cross was the most ancient and cruel form of capital punishment. In France it was rarely resorted to. In 1127 Louis the Bulky ordered Bertholde, the murderer of Charles the Righteous, to be crucified. Crucifixion was also inflicted at different times on Jews and heretics.

DECAPITATION.

Decapitation is also a punishment as old as the world. It was particularly common under Richelieu's rule. The Cardinal struck hard at the nobility, and caused a greater number of noble heads to fall under the sword of the law than had been sacrificed since the first origin of the French monarchy. The advantage of this capital execution reposed in the executioner's dexterity, which, unfortunately, could only be acquired by practice. History and our family records contain frightful examples of awkwardness in decapitation by sword or axe. It is well known that De Thou's head only fell at the eleventh blow, and a similar event happened at the execution of Madame Tiquet.

HANGING.

Hanging was in force as well as decapitation. The latter was the exclusive privilege of the nobility, while the first

Digitized by Google

was inflicted upon culprits of lower station. In certain cases, however, the rope was awarded to noblemen also. The guillotine replaced the gibbet under the Revolution.

THE STAKE.

The *Stake* was another torture followed by death inflicted in France as late as the seventeenth century.

QUARTERING.

Quartering was another horrible form of death in former days. Damiens, who attempted the life of Louis XV. in 1757, was the last who perished by it. Quartering consisted in tying the convict by the arms and legs to four horses, which were then driven in different directions until the execution was consummated. Quartering was almost exclusively inflicted on regicides. Horrible in itself, it was prefaced by other tortures of ingenious cruelty.

THE WHEEL.

The *Wheel*, or rack, was as barbarous as any other form of capital punishment. It consisted in tying the culprit on a wheel, breaking his limbs, and leaving him on the wheel until he expired. But it often happened that the judges ordered, by a *retentum*, that he should be strangled before his limbs were broken. This punishment was most frequent in France, and many innocent men suffered by it, among others the unfortunate Calas. The wheel was abolished in 1789.

DROWNING.

At the origin of the Monarchy, sorcerers and witches were sentenced to be *drowned*. Philippe Auguste extended this

Digitized by Google

punishment to untitled persons who should swear. Charles VI. applied it to all those guilty of sedition. Louis XI. seems also to have sanctioned drowning in certain cases, but the punishment disappeared after his death.

FLAYING ALIVE.

Flaying alive was often resorted to in France. The chamberlain of the Count de Rouci was flayed alive in 1366 for betraying Laon into the hands of the English; and the Constable of Armagnac, when he was made prisoner, was subjected to the same death by his enemies.

LAPIDATION AND EMPALEMENT.

The only instance of *Lapidation and Empalement* in France occurred under Frédégonde.

ESTRAPADE.

Estrapade, invented under Francis I., consisted in letting the culprit fall from a height in such a manner as to break his limbs.

BOILING.

Another kind of punishment, applied to utterers of counterfeit coin, was *Boiling*, either in oil or water. This was abandoned in the seventeenth century, but it was regularly abolished only in 1791.

LA CALE.

La Cale, of which a mild form is retained in the French navy, consisted in hoisting the culprit to a considerable height,

Digitized by Google

and then letting him fall. In *cale sèche* he fell on deck; in *cale humide* he fell in the water.

Before alluding to the last and only form of capital punishment, it is worth noticing that the middle ages provided a supreme protection against death, even at the foot of the scaffold. The culprit might, if he succeeded in slipping through the hands of his keepers, seek refuge in a church, and his person was sacred so long as he abided there. The Church was very jealous of this privilege of holy sanctuary. The culprit could be still more efficiently preserved if a woman consented to marry him. Numerous examples of this supreme salvation are quoted by mediæval historians.

THE GUILLOTINE.

The French Revolution, which made all citizens equal before the law, gave them the same privilege before death. On January 21, 1790, the following decree was published: 'In all cases of capital sentence, the punishment shall affect a single form, whatever may be the nature of the crime: the criminal shall be decapitated, and the execution shall take place by means of a special apparatus.' This machine, which was to bear the name, not of its inventor, but of Doctor Guillotin, who had improved it, was the *guillotine*. This zealous citizen, impelled by a humane sentiment which merely aimed at abridging decapitation, and depriving it of much of its physical suffering, had only perfected a machine known in Italy since 1507 under the name of *mannaia*. When Doctor Guillotin proposed this form of death to the Constituent Assembly, he was much laughed at; but his suggestion was eventually adopted. The machine was constructed in the following manner, and it has been but slightly altered since: On a scaffold from seven to eight feet high two parallel bars are made fast at one end; their top part is united by a strong cross-

Digitized by Google

bar. To this cross-bar is added a thick iron ring, in which is passed a rope which fixes and retains a ram. This is perpendicularly armed with a sharp and broad blade, which gradually becomes broader on all its surface, so that instead of striking perpendicularly, it strikes sideways, so that there is not an inch of the blade that does not serve. The ram weighs from sixty to eighty pounds, and its weight is doubled when it begins to slide down. It is enclosed in the groove of the bars. A spring makes it fast to the left bar; a band of iron descends along the outside of this same bar, and the handle is locked to a ring with a padlock, so that no accident is possible, and the weight only falls when the executioner interferes. To a weigh-plank strong straps are fastened, by which the criminal is attached under the armpits and over the legs, so that the body cannot move. As soon as the weigh-plank goes down, the head, being between the bars, is supported by a rounded cross-bar, the executioner's assistants lower another rounded cross-bar, the head being thus grooved in a perfect circle, which prevents it from moving in any way. This precaution is indispensable, in regard to the terrible inconveniences of fear. The executioner then touches the spring. The whole affair is done so quickly that only the thump of the blade when it slides down informs the spectators that the culprit is no longer of the living. The head falls into a basket full of bran, and the body is pushed into another wicker basket lined with very thick leather.

Although the guillotine was the common instrument of death, according to the law, hanging was frequently resorted to during the Revolution. 'A la lanterne!' was a well-known cry. It signified hanging from a gibbet to which was attached a lantern. Foulon, the Councillor of State, was the first who suffered in this way.[1] But the lantern was rather the instrument of summary justice.

[1] The Abbé Maury was once pursued by a mob, who cried 'À la lanterne!' 'Do you think you can see the clearer for putting me in the

Digitized by Google

JUDICIAL ORDEALS AND TORTURES.

In their search for the truth our ancestors often trusted to hazard, and soon persuaded themselves that its decrees came from the Divinity. The duel or *judicial combat* was instituted at the time of the invasion of the barbarians. The law of Burgundy decreed the duel when the parties would not abide by the primitive test of oath. Feudalism extended judicial combat; women, children, and priests were bound to bring forth a champion to sustain their cause by arms. The ordeal which at first only consisted in a struggle, was afterwards attended with solemn and specified formalities. It was preceded by a challenge, uttered before the tribunal; the person who asked for a judicial duel, threw down a glove as a gage of battle. The judges who ordered the duel were bound to see it out. The champions, before coming to blows, swore on the cross and missal not to have recourse to magic in the just quarrel they were about to fight for. The weapons differed according to classes: serfs were armed with a stick or a knife, and had a shield of leather called *canevas*; squires used only sword and shield. The conquered was regarded as condemned by judgment of Heaven, and an ignominious death awaited him if he did not perish by the blows of his opponent. In certain cases men, as well as women and children, could defer a quarrel to champions. In 591, Goutray ordered one of his chamberlains and one of his gamekeepers, who charged each other with having killed a buffalo, to fight in the lists. The chamberlain's champion and the gamekeeper killed each other. The chamberlain, duly convicted of the crime by the death of his champion, was chained to a post and stoned. In certain cases a combat between a man and an animal was permitted. The

place of a lantern?' said he, coolly. A general burst of laughter followed this sally, which saved his life. It was by the hand of this prelate that I was confirmed.—S.

Digitized by Google

judicial duel was authorised in civil and criminal actions. St. Louis attempted to substitute for it proof by witnesses; and from the time of Philippe Auguste as late as the seventeenth century, the duel could only take place with the permission of the King.

One of the most celebrated instances of these judicial combats was that of Jarnac and La Chataigneraie in 1547, under the reign of Henry II., when Jarnac cut his antagonist's ham by a blow which remained famous.

The so-called ordeals by the elements were four in number:

1. *The ordeal of the cross*, in use in France at the beginning of the ninth century, consisted in holding out one's arms cross-shape as long as possible during divine service. He who retained this position the longest had the better of his opponent. In his will Charlemagne ordered that the judgment of the cross should be resorted to in all quarrels that might arise out of the division of his states between his children.

2. *Ordeal by fire* was one of the most solemn. When it applied to writings the books were thrown into the fire, and the orthodoxy or the falseness of their contents were judged by the manner in which the works suffered the ordeal. When the ordeal was applied to men, two piles, of which the flames touched each other, were erected side by side. The accused, with the Host in his hand, rapidly traversed the flames, and if he succeeded in accomplishing the perilous journey, he was declared innocent. Among the most noteworthy examples of this kind of judgment, which also consisted in burning the feet of the accused, or in exposing them bare before an ardent brazier, I may quote Pierre Barthélemy, who pretended, at the time of the first crusade, that he had found the spike of the holy lance; charged with falsehood, he crossed through the flames with the Host in his hands, and accomplished the test successfully—but it is said that he died shortly after.

3. *Ordeal by cold or boiling water.*—The first of these tests was generally applied to people of low condition. The prisoner

Digitized by Google

heard mass, after which the priest made him kiss the cross and the gospel, and finally sprinkled him with holy water. He was then undressed, his right hand was tied to his left foot, and he was thrown into the water. If he went to the bottom, as was natural, he was reputed innocent; if, on the other hand, he remained at the surface, it was said that the water would not take him, and he was considered guilty. *Ordeal by boiling water* consisted in placing a cauldron full of water on a large fire; when the water was in a state of ebullition it was taken away from the flames, a rope was tied above it to which was suspended a ring, or any other object, which was then lowered into the water at different depths. At the first ordeal, the accused had only to plunge his hand to catch hold of the ring; at the second ordeal he plunged the arm up to the elbow; and at the third all the arm. When the ordeal was accomplished, the sufferer's arm was inserted in a bag on which the judge imprinted his seal, which was broken three days after, and then, if any mark of burning was still apparent, the accused was declared guilty; in the other case he was absolved.

4. *Ordeal by warm, hot, and red-hot iron.*—This ordeal consisted in taking with the hand a heated iron, or in walking with bare feet on burning iron. In the middle ages noblemen and priests had recourse to it. The accused, after fasting for three days, attended mass, and was led to the part of the church where the ordeal was to take place; there he took the iron which had been more or less heated, according to the gravity of the crime; he raised it two or three times, or carried it more or less far, according to the sentence. As in the preceding test, his hand was thrust into a bag, and was sealed for three days, and if it was without scar the accused was declared innocent. Ordeal by red-hot iron consisted in putting on a red-hot iron gauntlet, or in walking on iron bars, of which the usual number was nine, but which could be extended to twelve.

Ordeals founded on the belief that God always proved the innocence of the accused by a miracle were abandoned in the

Digitized by Google

thirteenth century, when St. Louis declared that combat was not a proof of right, and substituted evidential proof for judicial tests. The traces of this institution, however, existed until the sixteenth century.

There can be no doubt that torture was the result of the ancient superstition which had given birth to judicial ordeals. Torture comprised certain graduated torments inflicted upon a prisoner either to compel him to confess his crime, or to obtain the names of his accomplices. While he was subjected to these sufferings, a judge, standing close to the torturer or *questionnaire*, called upon the accused to say the truth, and wrote down his declarations, whence the name of *question* which was given to torture. *Question* was of two sorts, either *definite* or *preliminary*. These two categories were subdivided into *question ordinaire* and *extraordinaire*. Through the first it was sought to exact from the accused the confession of his guilt; through the second it was endeavoured to discover the names of the accomplices who had helped him in the perpetration of his crime. Torment carried to a certain limit constituted *question ordinaire;* it was doubled in *question extraordinaire*, which, as a rule, was only inflicted upon culprits previously sentenced to death.

Torturers had multiplied the instruments of punishment. Further it may be seen that each provincial parliament had its particular infliction, from which it could not depart. I shall begin by dwelling on the more general species of tortures, in which water, wood, fire, and iron were always used.

Torture by *water* consisted in seating the culprit on a stone stool, after his sentence had been read to him. His wrists were attached behind his back to two iron rings distant from each other. All the cords then entwined round his limbs and body were then pulled as much as possible, and when the body of the sufferer could not be stretched any more, a trestle was placed under his back. The *questionnaire* held a horn in one hand, and with the other he poured water in, and obliged the

Digitized by Google

criminal to swallow four pints in *question ordinaire*, and eight pints in *question extraordinaire*.

The *boot* was an instrument consisting of four planks, between which the sufferer's leg was pressed. The planks were pierced with holes, through which ropes were passed, so as to press the planks together. The executioner then drove wedges between the planks with a mallet, thus compressing and even breaking the limbs of the culprit. Ordinary torture included four wedges ; eight wedges were used in *question extraordinaire*.

The Parliament of Paris applied only two kinds of torture, by water and boot. In Brittany, the sufferer was tied to an iron chair, while his legs were brought by degrees in contact with the fire. At Rouen, the thumb and another finger, or the leg, were compressed ; at Besançon, the horse, which consisted in a piece of wood garnished with spikes, on which the culprit was placed astride, was generally used. At Autun torture was inflicted by pouring boiling oil on the feet. Estrapade prevailed at Orleans.

France was the country in which torture prevailed the longest. A declaration, dated October 24, 1780, abolished preparatory question, and another decree (March 1, 1788) did away with torture altogether.

THE EXECUTIONER.

In the primitive times of French society, the man on whom devolved the sad mission of putting criminals to death, or exacting confession by torture, took the name of Executioner of High Justice, because high judges and also royal judges alone had the right to pass sentence of death. In 1323 executioners were also designated as *commissaires spiculateurs*. It was only under Louis XI. that the epithet of *Bourreau* was applied to the executioner. Before the Revolution he was considered as a servant of the State, and held letters patent

Digitized by Google

signed by the King. Custom had established a degree of hierarchy in the profession. When the King had chosen a new executioner, the letters of nomination were thrown on the table by the wax-chafers of the high chancellor's office, and the executioner was to pick them up. The custom was abolished in 1645, and the title of executioner was given from hand to hand to the holder. The headsman was sworn before the court of his place of residence, and was nominated after ample information had been obtained concerning his habits, conduct, and piety. As a rule he was not allowed to reside in town, unless he took up his residence in the house of pillory, which was assigned to him as his quarters.

In certain localities he wore a costume consisting in a jacket bearing the arms of the town, with a ladder embroidered on the breast, and a gibbet on the back. The office of executioner was not in France, as in Spain, strictly hereditary; but for many reasons not difficult to imagine, it will be readily understood that the function seldom passed out of a family when they had once got into it. This respect of direct and legitimate succession went so far as to admit of a kind of minority in the monopoly of the scaffold, and this led to a decision of which the sacrilegious horror was not probably realised by the magistrates who were responsible for it. I said before that in 1726, after the death of one of my ancestors, Charles Sanson, his son Charles Jean-Baptiste Sanson was called upon to take his place at the age of seven. An assistant executioner named Prudhomme was entrusted with his functions, in regard to his youth, but it was required that he should sanction every execution by standing beside his assistant.

When the executioner had only daughters, his son-in-law was expected to take his place after death. Thus it was that the dismal office came down to me through six generations.

If the office of executioner, during the middle ages and under the Monarchy, was deprived of honour, it was in return invested with many pecuniary privileges. The executioner's

Digitized by Google

chief right was that of *havée* (from *avoir*, to have). This right consisted in taking as much of the corn sold in the market as he could take with his hands. This privilege had been granted to the executioner to help him in his personal wants, and to save him the trouble of buying provisions, which he could not easily procure otherwise, many people declining to receive money which came from such hands as his. The executioner could employ assistants to collect his tax; and the number of men he was led to engage for the purpose all but absorbed all his profits. In consequence of this, his right in certain towns was exchanged for a yearly allowance of money. In a letter addressed to the authorities by Tardiveau, the local executioner, the writer complains that he is obliged to employ a regular army of assistants in collecting *havée*. So as to distinguish those who had paid him from his other debtors, the executioner or his assistants marked them on the shoulder or elbow with white chalk. This brought on riots and seditions; and, moreover, as the right of *havée*, or rather the manner of exercising it, caused rising discontent, it was at last replaced by an increase of salary.

Many other privileges were attached to the office besides that which I have mentioned. By an order of the Châtelet, dated 1530, the executioner of Paris had a right of taxation on fruit, grapes, nuts, hay, eggs, and wool; also a toll on the Petit-Pont, a tax on barges, a sum for each patient suffering from leprosy, a sum on brooms, coals, oysters, fish, cakes of Epiphany, water-cress sellers, and on stray pigs. When one of his servants captured a pig, he took it to the Hôtel-Dieu, and either the head or a sum of money was given in return. The executioner had also a right to a part of the apparel of the culprits who suffered by his hands; at first only clothes below the waist were given him, but eventually he obtained the whole apparel.

In certain cities the executioner levied a tax on women of loose life. The monks of Saint-Martin gave him five loaves

Digitized by Google

and five bottles of wine for every execution that took place on their lands; those of Saint Geneviève paid him five sols yearly in lieu of right of *havée*; and on St. Vincent Day the abbot of Saint Germain-des-Près gave him a pig's head, and assigned to him a prominent place in the procession of the abbey.

The executioner also received a sum of money for each execution.

In 1721 all the rights appertaining to the office were abolished, and the emoluments of the executioner were fixed at 16,000 livres; and up to 1793 the execution of capital sentences was entrusted to the three following functionaries:

1. The *executioner.*
2. The *questionnaire.*
3. The *carpenter.*

All punishments followed by death concerned the executioner. Besides his salary of 16,000 livres, he received special fees for executions outside the walls of Paris. All his expenses were defrayed. His assistants were of two sorts: 1. The sons of provincial executioners, unpaid, but fed and boarded. 2. The servants, who also acted in the capacity of private domestics to the executioner.

The *questionnaire* was sometimes the son or relative of the executioner. He inflicted *question ordinaire* and *extraordinaire*, and also preliminary torture.

If one is to judge by the salary (from 40,000 to 50,000 francs), the office of *carpenter* was a profitable one. The carpenter's business was to construct, repair, and keep in order scaffolds and instruments of punishment.

In 1793 the National Convention completely altered the position of public executioners. By a decree issued on June 13, 1793, it was decided that an executioner should be attached to each department of the Republic. The salary of executioners was to be paid by the State. In towns of which the population did not exceed 50,000 inhabitants, the salary was fixed at 2,400 livres; in those numbering from 50,000 to

Digitized by Google

100,000 inhabitants, at 4,000 livres ; and, lastly, the emoluments of the executioner of Paris were diminished from 16,000 to 10,000 livres. His assistants were paid on the same scale. During the Reign of Terror, however, a special fee of 8,000 francs was added to his salary. It was not too much for what he had to do then.

The last reform in the position of executioners was enacted in 1849, when the salary of the executioner of Paris was lowered to 5,000 francs; the executioner of Lyons received 4,000 francs ; those of Bordeaux, Rouen, and Toulouse, 3,000 francs, and the gang of less important headsmen, each 2,400 francs. It will be seen that we are far from the time when M. de Paris collected 50,000 francs only for his right of *havée*. It is well to remark that no more letters patent are held by executioners ; that the salary has become a kind of petty stipend ; and the conclusion indicated by this state of things is that when occupations of the kind I have described gradually lose in importance, the time is not distant when they shall disappear altogether.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google